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modern devices have averted some of the most threatening dangers to the poor. Insurance has applied the savings of all to the protection of the few who are unfortunate. Co-operation has sometimes given the advantage of capital to labor. Savings-banks have cultivated the economy and temperance of the working classes, and have applied their savings to reproduction. Cheap means of communication have distributed their numbers, and political rights have elevated their self-respect.

In general, whatever elevates the dignity of the laborer, or sharpens his faculties, or improves his character and strengthens his self-control, or tends to distribute wealth and to make the possession of land easy, in so far tends to prevent the peculiar debasement, dependence, and misery which constitute pauperism. In that far future of good, for which the benevolent sceptic and the Christian alike labor, though with different hopes, — the first hues of whose morning we sometimes see, — there may be indeed the poor, but there need be, we may hope, no paupers. There may be individual misfortune, weakness, and inequality, but there need be no degradation or dependence, or massed and crowded “misery.”

CHARLES L. BRACE.

ART. IV. — SPENSER.

CHAUCER had been in his grave one hundred and fifty years ere England had secreted choice material enough for the making of another great poet. The nature of the individual man and of men living together in societies seems to have its periodic ebbs and floods, its oscillations between the ideal and the matter-of-fact, so that the doubtful boundary line of shore between them is in one generation a hard sandy actuality strewn only with such remembrances of beauty as a dead sea-moss here and there, and in the next is whelmed with those lacelike curves of ever-gaining, ever-receding foam, and that dance of joyous spray which for a moment catches and holds the sunshine.

From the two centuries between 1400 and 1600 the indefat-

igable Ritson in his *Bibliographia Poetica* has made us a catalogue of some six hundred English poets, or, more properly, verse-makers. Ninety-nine in a hundred of them are mere names, most of them no more than shadows of names, some of them mere initials. Nor can it be said of them that their works have perished because they were written in an obsolete dialect; for it is the poem that keeps the language alive, and not the language that buoys up the poem. The revival of letters, as it is called, was at first the revival of *ancient* letters, which, while it made men pedants, could do very little toward making them poets, much less toward making them original writers. There was nothing left of the freshness, vivacity, invention, and careless faith in the present which make many of the productions of the Norman Trouvères delightful reading even now. The whole of Europe during the fifteenth century produced no book which has continued readable, or has become in any sense of the word a classic. I do not mean that that century has left us no illustrious names, that it was not enriched with some august intellects who kept alive the apostolic succession of thought and speculation, who passed along the still unextinguished torch of intelligence, the *lampada vitæ*, to those who came after them. But a classic is properly a book which maintains itself by virtue of that happy coalescence of matter and style, that innate and exquisite sympathy between the thought that gives life and the form which consents to every mood of grace and dignity, which can be simple without being vulgar, elevated without being distant, and which is something neither ancient nor modern, always new and incapable of growing old. It is not his Latin which makes Horace cosmopolitan, nor can Béranger's French prevent his becoming so. No hedge of language however thorny, no dragon-coil of centuries, will keep men away from these true apples of the Hesperides if once they have caught sight or scent of them. If poems die, it is because there was never true life in them, that is, that true poetic vitality which no depth of thought, no airiness of fancy, no sincerity of feeling can singly communicate, but which leaps throbbing at touch of that shaping faculty the imagination. Take Aristotle's ethics, the scholastic philosophy, the theology of Aquinas, the Ptolemaic system of astron-

omy, the small politics of a provincial city of the Middle Ages, mix in at will Grecian, Roman, and Christian mythology, and tell me what chance there is to make an immortal poem of such an incongruous mixture. Can these dry bones live? Yes, Dante can create such a soul under these ribs of death that one hundred and fifty editions of his poem shall be called for in these last sixty years, the first half of the sixth century since his death.

Accordingly I am apt to believe that the complaints one sometimes hears of the neglect of our older literature are the regrets of archæologists rather than of critics. One does not need to advertise the squirrels where the nut-trees are, nor could any amount of lecturing persuade them to spend their teeth on a hollow nut.

On the whole, the Scottish poetry of the fifteenth century has more meat in it than the English, but this is to say very little. Where it is meant to be serious and lofty it falls into the same vices of unreality and allegory which were the fashion of the day, and which there are some patriots so fearfully and wonderfully made as to relish. Stripped of the archaisms (that turn every *y* to a meaningless *z*, spell which *quhilk*, shake *schaik*, bugle *bowgill*, powder *puldir*, and will not let us simply whistle till we have puckered our mouths to *quhissill*), in which the Scottish antiquaries love to keep it disguised, — as if it were nearer to poetry the further it got from all human recognition and sympathy, — stripped of these, there is little to distinguish it from the contemporary verse-mongering south of the Tweed. Their compositions are generally as stiff and artificial as a trelis, in striking contrast with the popular ballad-poetry of Scotland (some of which possibly falls within this period, though most of it is later) which clambers, lawlessly if you will, but at least freely and simply, twining the bare stem of old tradition with graceful sentiment and lively natural sympathies. I find a few sweet and flowing verses in Dunbar's "Merle and Nightingale," — indeed one whole stanza that has always seemed exquisite to me. It is this : —

"Ne'er sweeter noise was heard by living man
Than made this merry, gentle nightingale.
Her sound went with the river as it ran
Out through the frish and flourished lusty vale ;

O merle, quoth she, O fool, leave off thy tale,
For in thy song good teaching there is none,
For both are lost, — the time and the travail
Of every love but upon God alone."

But except this lucky poem, I find little else in the serious verses of Dunbar that does not seem to me tedious and pedantic. I dare say a few more lines might be found scattered here and there, but I hold it a sheer waste of time to hunt after these thin needles of wit buried in unwieldy haystacks of verse. If that be genius, the less we have of it the better. His "Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins," over which the excellent Lord Hailes went into raptures, is wanting in everything but coarseness; and if his invention dance at all, it is like a galley-slave in chains under the lash. It would be well for us if the sins themselves were indeed such wretched bugaboos as he has painted for us. What he means for humor is but the dullest vulgarity; his satire would be Billingsgate if it could, and, failing, becomes a mere offence in the nostrils, for it takes a great deal of salt to keep scurrility sweet. Mr. Sibbald, in his "Chronicle of Scottish Poetry," has admirably preserved more than enough of it, and seems to find a sort of national savor therein, such as delights his countrymen in a *haggis*, or the German in his *sauer-kraut*. The uninitiated foreigner puts his handkerchief to his nose, wonders, and gets out of the way as soon as he civilly can. Barbour's "Brus," if not precisely a poem, has passages whose simple tenderness raises them to that level. That on Freedom is familiar. But its highest merit is the natural and unstrained tone of manly courage in it, the easy and familiar way in which Barbour always takes chivalrous conduct as a matter of course, as if heroism were the least you could ask of any man. I modernize a few verses to show what I mean. When the King of England turns to fly from the battle of Bannockburn (and Barbour with his usual generosity tells us he has heard that Sir Aymer de Valence led him away by the bridle-rein against his will), Sir Giles d'Argente

"Saw the king thus and his menie
Shape them to flee so speedily,
He came right to the king in hy [hastily]

And said, 'Sir, since that is so
That ye thus gate your gate will go,
Have ye good-day, for back will I:
Yet never fled I certainly,
And I choose here to bide and die
Than to live shamefully and fly.'"

The "Brus" is in many ways the best-rhymed chronicle ever written. It is national in a high and generous way, but I confess I have little faith in that quality in literature which is commonly called nationality, — a kind of praise seldom given where there is anything better to be said. Literature that loses its meaning, or the best part of it, when it gets beyond sight of the parish steeple, is not what I understand by literature. To tell you when you cannot fully taste a book that it is because it is so thoroughly national, is to condemn the book. To say it of a poem is even worse, for it is to say that what should be true to the whole compass of human nature is true only to some north-and-by-east-half-east point of it. I can understand the nationality of Firdusi when, looking sadly back to the former glories of his country, he tells us that "the nightingale still sings old Persian"; I can understand the nationality of Burns when he turns his plough aside to spare the rough burr thistle, and hopes he may write a song or two for dear auld Scotia's sake. That sort of nationality belongs to a country of which we are all citizens, — that country of the heart which has no boundaries laid down on the map. All great poetry must smack of the soil, for it must be rooted in it, must suck life and substance from it, but it must do so with the aspiring instinct of the pine that climbs forever toward diviner air, and not in the grovelling fashion of the potato. Any verse that makes you and me foreigners is not only not great poetry, but no poetry at all. Dunbar's works were disinterred and edited some thirty years ago by Mr. Laing, and whoso is national enough to like thistles may browse there to his heart's content. I am inclined for other pasture, having long ago satisfied myself by a good deal of dogged reading that every generation is sure of its own share of bores without borrowing from the past.

A little later came Gawain Douglas, whose translation of the *Æneid* is linguistically valuable, and whose introductions to

the seventh and twelfth books — the one describing winter and the other May — have been safely praised, they are so hard to read. There is certainly some poetic feeling in them, and the welcome to the sun comes as near enthusiasm as is possible for a ploughman, with a good steady yoke of oxen, who lays over one furrow of verse, and then turns about to lay the next as cleverly alongside it as he can. But it is a wrong done to good taste to hold up this *item* kind of description any longer as deserving any other credit than that of a good memory. It is a mere bill of parcels, a *post-mortem* inventory of nature, where imagination is not merely not called for, but would be out of place. Why, a recipe in the cookery-book is as much like a good dinner as this kind of stuff is like true word-painting. The poet with a real eye in his head does not give us everything, but only the *best* of everything. He selects, he combines, or else gives what is characteristic only, while the false style of which I have been speaking seems to be as glad to get a pack of impertinences on its shoulders as Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress was to be rid of his. One strong verse that can hold itself upright (as the French critic Rivarol said of Dante) with the bare help of the substantive and verb, is worth acres of this dead cordwood piled stick on stick, a boundless continuity of dryness. I would rather have written that half-stanza of Longfellow's, in the "Wreck of the Hesperus," of the "billow that swept her crew like icicles from her deck," than all Gawain Douglas's tedious enumeration of meteorological phenomena put together. A real landscape is never tiresome; it never presents itself to us as a disjointed succession of isolated particulars; we take it in with one sweep of the eye, — its light, its shadow, its melting gradations of distance; we do not say it is this, it is that, and the other; and we may be sure that if a description in poetry is tiresome there is a grievous mistake somewhere. All the pictorial adjectives in the dictionary will not bring it a hair's-breadth nearer to truth and nature. The fact is that what we see is in the mind to a greater degree than we are commonly aware. As Coleridge says, —

"O lady, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone doth Nature live!"

I have made the unfortunate Dunbar the text for a diatribe

on the subject of descriptive poetry, because I find that this old ghost is not laid yet, but comes back like a vampire to suck the life out of a true enjoyment of poetry, — and the medicine by which vampires were cured was to unbury them, drive a stake through them, and get them under ground again with all despatch. The first duty of the Muse is to be delightful, and it is an injury done to all of us when we are put in the wrong by a kind of statutory affirmation on the part of the critics of something to which our judgment will not consent, and from which our taste revolts. A collection of poets is commonly made up, nine parts in ten, of this perfunctory verse-making, and I never look at one without regretting that we have lost that excellent Latin phrase, *Corpus poetarum*. In fancy I always read it on the backs of the volumes, — a *body* of poets, indeed, with scarce one soul to a hundred of them.

One genuine English poet illustrated the early years of the sixteenth century, — John Skelton. He had vivacity, fancy, humor, and originality. Gleams of the truest poetical sensibility alternate in him with an almost brutal coarseness. He was truly Rabelaisian before Rabelais. But there is a freedom and hilarity in much of his writing that gives it a singular attraction. A breath of cheerfulness runs along the slender stream of his verse, under which it seems to ripple and crinkle, catching and casting back the sunshine like a stream blown on by clear western winds.

But Skelton was an exceptional blossom of autumn. A long and dreary winter follows. Surrey, who brought back with him from Italy the blank-verse not long before introduced by Trissino, is to some extent another exception. He had the sentiment of nature and unhackneyed feeling, but he has no mastery of verse, nor any elegance of diction. We have Gascoyne, Surrey, Wyatt, stiff, pedantic, artificial, systematic as a country cemetery, and, worst of all, the whole time desperately in love. Every verse is as flat, thin, and regular as a lath, and their poems are nothing more than bundles of such tied trimly together. They are said to have refined our language. Let us devoutly hope they did, for it would be pleasant to be grateful to them for something. But I fear it was not so, for only genius can do that; and Sternhold and Hopkins are inspired

men in comparison with them. For Sternhold was at least the author of two noble stanzas : —

“ The Lord descended from above
And bowed the heavens high,
And underneath his feet he cast
The darkness of the sky ;
On cherubs and on cherubims
Full royally he rode,
And on the wings of all the winds
Came flying all abroad.”

But Gascoyne and the rest did nothing more than put the worst school of Italian love poetry into an awkward English dress. The Italian proverb says, “ *Inglese italianizzato, Diavolo incarnato,*” that an Englishman Italianized is the very devil incarnate, and one feels the truth of it here. The very titles of their poems set one yawning, and their wit is the cause of the dullness that is in other men. “ The lover, deceived by his love, repenteth him of the true love he bare her.” As thus : —

“ Where I sought heaven there found I hap ;
From danger unto death,
Much like the mouse that treads the trap
In hope to find her food,
And bites the bread that stops her breath, —
So in like case I stood.”

“ The lover, accusing his love for her unfaithfulness, proposeth to live in liberty.” He says : —

“ But I am like the beaten fowl
That from the net escaped,
And thou art like the ravening owl
That all the night hath waked.”

And yet at the very time these men were writing there were simple ballad-writers who could have set them an example of simplicity, force, and grandeur. Compare the futile efforts of these poetasters to kindle themselves by a painted flame, and to be pathetic over the lay figure of a mistress, with the wild vigor and almost fierce sincerity of the “ *Twa Corbies* ” : —

“ As I was walking all alone
I heard twa corbies making a moan.
The one unto the other did say,
Where shall we gang dine to-day ?

In beyond that old turf dyke
 I wot there lies a new-slain knight ;
 And naebody kens that he lies there
 But his hawk and his hound and his lady fair.
 His hound is to the hunting gone,
 His hawk to fetch the wild fowl home,
 His lady has ta'en another mate,
 So we may make our dinner sweet.
 O'er his white bones forevermair
 The wind shall blow forevermair."

There was a lesson in rhetoric for our worthy friends, could they have understood it. But they were as much afraid of an attack of nature as of the plague.

Such was the poetical inheritance of style and diction into which Spenser was born, and which he did more than any one else to redeem from the leaden gripe of vulgar and pedantic conceit. Sir Philip Sidney, born the year after him, with a keener critical instinct, and a taste earlier emancipated than his own, would have been, had he lived longer, perhaps even more directly influential in educating the taste and refining the vocabulary of his contemporaries and immediate successors. The better of his pastoral poems in the "Arcadia" are, in my judgment, more simple, natural, and, above all, more pathetic than those of Spenser, who sometimes strains the shepherd's pipe with a blast that would better suit the trumpet. Sidney had the good sense to feel that it was unsophisticated sentiment rather than rusticity of phrase that befitted such themes.* He recognized the distinction between simplicity and vulgarity, which Wordsworth was so long in finding out, and seems to have divined the fact that there is but one kind of English that is always appropriate, and never obsolete, namely, the very best.† With the single exception of Thomas Campion, his experiments in adapting classical metres to English verse are more successful than those of his contemporaries. Some of

* In his "Defence of Poesy" he condemns the archaisms and provincialisms of the "Shepherd's Calendar."

† "There is, as you must have heard Wordsworth point out, a language of pure, intelligible English, which was spoken in Chaucer's time, and is spoken in ours; equally understood then and now; and of which the Bible is the written and permanent standard, as it has undoubtedly been the great means of preserving it." — *Southeys Life and Correspondence*, III. 193, 194.

his elegiacs are not ungrateful to the ear, and it can hardly be doubted that Coleridge borrowed from his eclogue of Strephon and Klaius the pleasing movement of his own *Catullian Hendecasyllabics*. Spenser, perhaps out of deference to Sidney, also tried his hand at English hexameters, the introduction of which was claimed by his friend Gabriel Harvey, who thereby assured to himself an immortality of grateful remembrance. But the result was a series of jolts and jars, proving that the language had run off the track. He seems to have been half conscious of it himself, and there is a gleam of mischief in what he writes to Harvey: "I like your late English hexameter so exceedingly well that I also enure my pen sometime in that kind, which I find indeed, as I have often heard you defend in word, neither so hard nor so harsh but that it will easily yield itself to our mother-tongue. For the only or chiefest hardness, which seemeth, is in the accent, which sometime gapeth and, as it were, yawneeth ill-favoredly, coming short of that it should, and sometime exceeding the measure of the number, as in *Carpenter*; the middle syllable being used short in speech, when it shall be read long in verse, seemeth like a lame gosling that draweth one leg after her; and *Heaven* being used short as one syllable, when it is in verse stretched out with a diastole, is like a lame dog that holds up one leg."* It is almost inconceivable that Spenser's hexameters should have been written by the man who was so soon to teach his native language how to soar and sing, and to give a fuller sail to English verse.

One of the most striking facts in our literary history is the pre-eminence at once so frankly and unanimously conceded to Spenser by his contemporaries. At first, it is true, he had not many rivals. Before the "Faery Queen" two long poems were printed and popular,—the "Mirror for Magistrates" and Warner's "Albion's England,"—and not long after it came the

* Nash, who has far better claims than Swift to be called the English Rabelais, thus at once describes and parodies Harvey's hexameters in prose, "that drunken, staggering kind of verse, which is all up hill and down hill, like the way betwixt Stamford and Beechfield, and goes like a horse plunging through the mire in the deep of winter, now soused up to the saddle, and straight aloft on his tiptoes." It was a happy thought to satirize (in this inverted way) prose written in the form of verse.

“Polyolbion” of Drayton and the “Barons’ Wars” of Daniel. This was the period of the saurians in English poetry, interminable poems, book after book and canto after canto, like far-stretching *vertebræ*, that at first sight would seem to have rendered earth unfit for the habitation of man. They most of them sleep well now, as once they made their readers sleep, and their huge remains lie embedded in the deep morasses of Chambers and Anderson. We wonder at the length of face and general atrabilious look that mark the portraits of the men of that generation, but it is no marvel when even their relaxations were such downright hard work. Fathers when their day on earth was up must have folded down the leaf and left the task to be finished by their sons, — a dreary inheritance. Yet both Drayton and Daniel are fine poets, though both of them in their most elaborate works, made shipwreck of their genius on the shoal of a bad subject. Neither of them could make poetry coalesce with gazetteering or chronicle-making. It was like trying to put a declaration of love into the forms of a declaration in trover. The “Polyolbion” is nothing less than a versified gazetteer of England and Wales, — fortunately Scotland was not yet annexed, or the poem would have been even longer, and already it is the plesiosaurus of verse. Mountains, rivers, and even marshes are personified, to narrate historical episodes, or to give us geographical lectures. There are two fine verses in the seventh book, where, speaking of the cutting down some noble woods, he says, —

“Their trunks like aged folk now bare and naked stand,
As for revenge to heaven each held a withered hand”;

and there is a passage about the sea in the twentieth book that comes near being fine; but the far greater part is mere joiner-work. Consider the life of man, that we flee away as a shadow, that our days are as a post, and then think whether we can afford to honor such a draft upon our time as is implied in thirty books all in alexandrines! Even the laborious Selden, who wrote annotations on it, sometimes more entertaining than the text, gave out at the end of the eighteenth book. Yet Drayton could write well, and had an agreeable lightness of fancy, as his “Nymphidia” proves. His poem “To the Cambro-Britons on their Harp” is full of vigor; it runs, it

leaps, clashing its verses like swords upon bucklers, and moves the pulse to a charge.

Daniel was in all respects a man of finer mould. He did indeed refine our tongue, and deserved the praise his contemporaries concur in giving him of being "well-languaged." * Writing two hundred and fifty years ago, he stands in no need of a glossary, and I have noted scarce a dozen words, and not more turns of phrase, in his works, that have become obsolete. This certainly indicates both remarkable taste and equally remarkable judgment. There is an equable dignity in his thought and sentiment such as we rarely meet. His best poems always remind me of a table-land, where, because all is so level, we are apt to forget on how lofty a plane we are standing. I think his "Musophilus" the best poem of its kind in the language. The reflections are natural, the expression condensed, the thought weighty, and the language worthy of it. But he also wasted himself on an historical poem, in which the characters were incapable of that remoteness from ordinary associations which is essential to the ideal. Not that we can escape into the ideal by *merely* emigrating into the past or the unfamiliar. As in the German legend the little black Kobold of prose that haunts us in the present will seat himself on the first load of furniture when we undertake our flitting, if the magician be not there to exorcise him. No man can jump off his own shadow, nor, for that matter, off his own age, and it is very likely that Daniel had only the thinking and languaging parts of a poet's outfit, without the higher creative gift which alone can endow his conceptions with enduring life and with an interest which transcends the parish limits of his generation. In the prologue to his "Masque at Court" he has unconsciously defined his own poetry: —

"Wherein no wild, no rude, no antic sport,
But tender passions, motions soft and grave,
The still spectator must expect to have"

* Edmund Bolton in his *Hypercritica* says, "The works of Sam Daniel contained somewhat a flat, but yet withal a very pure and copious English, and words as warrantable as any man's, and *fitter perhaps for prose than measure.*" I have italicized his second thought, which chimes curiously with the feeling Daniel leaves in the mind. (See Haslewood's *Ancient Crit. Essays*, Vol. II.)

And indeed his verse does not snatch you away from ordinary associations and hurry you along with it as is the wont of the higher kinds of poetry, but leaves you, as it were, upon the bank watching the peaceful current and lulled by its somewhat monotonous murmur. His best-known poem, blunderingly misprinted in all the collections, is that addressed to the Countess of Cumberland. It is an amplification of Horace's *Integer Vitæ*, and when we compare it with the original we miss the point, the compactness, and above all the urbane tone of the original. It is very fine English, but it is the English of diplomacy somehow, and is never downright this or that, but always has the honor to be so or so, with sentiments of the highest consideration. Yet the praise of *well-linguaged*, since it implies that good writing then as now demanded choice and forethought, is not without interest for those who would classify the elements of a style that will wear and hold its colors well. His diction, if wanting in the more hardy evidences of muscle, has a suppleness and spring that give proof of training and endurance. His "Defence of Rhyme," written in prose (a more difficult test than verse), has a passionate eloquence that reminds one of Burke, and is more lightarmed and modern than the prose of Milton fifty years later. For us Occidentals he has a kindly prophetic word : —

" And who in time knows whither we may vent
The treasure of our tongue ? to what strange shores
The gain of our best glory may be sent
To enrich unknowing nations with our stores ?
What worlds in the yet unformed Occident
May come refined with accents that are ours ? "

During the period when Spenser was getting his artistic training a great change was going on in our mother-tongue, and the language of literature was disengaging itself more and more from that of ordinary talk. The poets of Italy, Spain, and France began to rain influence and to modify and refine not only style but vocabulary. Men were discovering new worlds in more senses than one, and the visionary finger of expectation still pointed forward. There was, as we learn from contemporary pamphlets, very much the same demand for a national literature that we have heard in America. This

demand was nobly answered in the next generation. But no man contributed so much to the transformation of style and language as Spenser, for not only did he deliberately endeavor at reform, but by the charm of his diction, the novel harmonies of his verse, his ideal method of treatment, and the splendor of his fancy, he made the new manner popular and fruitful. We can trace in Spenser's poems the gradual growth of his taste through experiment and failure to that assured self-confidence which indicates that he had at length found out the true bent of his genius, — that happiest of discoveries (and not so easy as it might seem) which puts a man in undisturbed possession of his own individuality. Before his time the boundary between poetry and prose had not been clearly defined. His great merit lies not only in the ideal treatment with which he glorified common things and gilded them with a ray of enthusiasm, but far more in the ideal point of view which he first revealed to his countrymen. He at first sought for that remoteness, which is implied in an escape from the realism of daily life, in the pastoral, a kind of writing which, oddly enough, from its original intention as a protest in favor of naturalness, and of human as opposed to heroic sentiments, had degenerated into the most artificial of abstractions. But he was soon convinced of his error, and was not long in choosing between an unreality which pretended to be real and those everlasting realities of the mind which seem unreal only because they lie beyond the horizon of the every-day world and become visible only when the mirage of fantasy lifts them up and hangs them in an ideal atmosphere. As in the old fairy-tales, the task which the age imposes on its poet is to weave its straw into a golden tissue; and when every device has failed, in comes the witch Imagination, and with a touch the miracle is achieved, simple as miracles always are after they are wrought.

Spenser, like Chaucer a Londoner, was born in 1553.* Noth-

* Mr. Hales, in the excellent memoir of the poet prefixed to the Globe edition of his works, puts his birth a year earlier, on the strength of a line in the sixtieth sonnet. But it is not established that this sonnet was written in 1593, and even if it were, a sonnet is not upon oath, and the poet would prefer the round number forty, which suited the measure of his verse, to thirty-nine or forty-one, which might have been truer to the measure of his days.

ing is known of his parents, except that the name of his mother was Elizabeth; but he was of gentle birth, as he more than once informs us, with the natural satisfaction of a poor man of genius at a time when the business talent of the middle class was opening to it the door of prosperous preferment. In 1569 he was entered as a sizar at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and in due course took his bachelor's degree in 1573, and his master's in 1576. He is supposed, on insufficient grounds, as it appears to me, to have met with some disgust or disappointment during his residence at the University.* Between 1576 and 1578 Spenser seems to have been with some of his kinsfolk "in the North." It was during this interval that he conceived his fruitless passion for the Rosalinde, whose jilting him for another shepherd, whom he calls Menalcas, is somewhat perfunctorily bemoaned in his pastorals.† Before the publication of his "*Shepherd's Kalendar*" in 1579, he had made the acquaintance of Sir Philip Sidney, and was domiciled with him for a time at Penshurst, whether as guest or literary dependant is uncertain. In October, 1579, he is in the household of the Earl of Leicester. In July, 1580, he accompanied Lord Grey de Wilton to Ireland as secretary, and in that country he spent the rest of his life, with occasional flying visits to England to

* This has been inferred from a passage in one of Gabriel Harvey's letters to him. But it would seem more natural, from the many allusions in Harvey's pamphlets against Nash, that it was his own wrongs which he had in mind, and his self-absorption would take it for granted that Spenser sympathized with him in all his grudges. Harvey is a remarkable instance of the refining influence of classical studies. Amid the pedantic farrago of his omni-sufficiency (to borrow one of his own words) we come suddenly upon passages whose gravity of sentiment, stateliness of movement, and purity of diction remind us of Landor. These lucid intervals in his overweening vanity explain and justify the friendship of Spenser. Yet the reiteration of emphasis with which he insists on 'all the world's knowing that Nash had called him an ass, probably gave Shakespeare the hint for one of the most comic touches in the character of Dogberry.

† The late Major C. G. Halpine, in a very interesting essay, makes it extremely probable that Rosalinde is the anagram of Rose Daniel, sister of the poet, and married to John Florio. He leaves little doubt, also, that the name of Spenser's wife (hitherto unknown) was Elizabeth Nagle. (See "*Atlantic Monthly*," Vol. II. 674, November, 1858.) Mr. Halpine informed me that he found the substance of his essay among the papers of his father, the late Rev. N. J. Halpine, of Dublin. The latter published in the series of the Shakespeare Society a sprightly little tract entitled "*Oberon*," which, if not quite convincing, is well worth reading for its ingenuity and research.

publish poems or in search of preferment. His residence in that country has been compared to that of Ovid in Pontus. And, no doubt, there were certain outward points of likeness. The Irishry by whom he was surrounded were to the full as savage, as hostile, and as tenacious of their ancestral habitudes as the Scythians * who made Tomi a prison, and the descendants of the earlier English settlers had degenerated as much as the Mix-Hellenes who disgusted the Latin poet. Spenser himself looked on his life in Ireland as a banishment. In his "Colin Clout's come Home again" he tells us that Sir Walter Raleigh, who visited him in 1589, and heard what was then finished of the "Faery Queen," —

"Gan to cast great liking to my lore
And great disliking to my luckless lot,
That banisht had myself, like wight forlore,
Into that waste, where I was quite forgot.
The which to leave thenceforth he counselled me,
Unmeet for man in whom was aught regardful,
And wend with him his Cynthia to see,
Whose grace was great and bounty most rewardful."

But Spenser was already living at Kilcolman Castle (which, with 3,028 acres of land from the forfeited estates of the Earl of Desmond, was confirmed to him by grant two years later), amid scenery at once placid and noble, whose varied charm he felt profoundly. He could not complain, with Ovid, —

Non liber hic ullus, non qui mihi commodet aurem,"

for he was within reach of a cultivated society, which gave him the stimulus of hearty admiration both as poet and scholar. Above all, he was fortunate in a seclusion that prompted study and deepened meditation, while it enabled him to converse with his genius disengaged from those worldly influences which would have disenchanting it of its mystic enthusiasm, if they did not muddle it ingloriously away. Surely this sequestered nest was more congenial to the brooding of those ethereal visions of the "Faery Queen" and to giving his "soul a loose" than

"The smoke, the wealth, and noise of Rome,
And all the busy pageantry
That wise men scorn and fools adore."

* In his prose tract on Ireland, Spenser, perhaps with some memory of Ovid in his mind, derives the Irish mainly from the Scythians.

Yet he longed for London, if not with the homesickness of Bussy-Rabutin in exile from the Parisian sun, yet enough to make him joyfully accompany Raleigh thither in the early winter of 1589, carrying with him the first three books of the great poem begun ten years before. Horace's *nonum prematur in annum* had been more than complied with, and the success was answerable to the well-seasoned material and conscientious faithfulness of the work. But Spenser did not stay long in London to enjoy his fame. Seen close at hand, with its jealousies, intrigues, and selfish basenesses, the court had lost the enchantment lent by the distance of Kilcolman. A nature so prone to ideal contemplation as Spenser's would be profoundly shocked by seeing too closely the ignoble springs of contemporaneous policy, and learning by what paltry personal motives the noble opportunities of the world are at any given moment endangered. It is a sad discovery that history is so mainly made by ignoble men.

"Vide questo globo

Tal ch'ei sorrise del suo vil semblante."

In his "Colin Clout," written just after his return to Ireland, he speaks of the Court in a tone of contemptuous bitterness, in which, as it seems to me, there is more of the sorrow of disillusion than of the gall of personal disappointment. He speaks, so he tells us, —

"To warn young shepherds' wandering wit
Which, through report of that life's painted bliss,
Abandon quiet home to seek for it
And leave their lambs to loss misled amiss;
For, sooth to say, it is no sort of life
For shepherd fit to live in that same place,
Where each one seeks with malice and with strife
To thrust down other into foul disgrace
Himself to raise; and he doth soonest rise
That best can handle his deceitful wit
In subtle shifts
To which him needs a guileful hollow heart
Masked with fair dissembling courtesy,
A filed tongue furnished with terms of art,
No art of school, but courtiers' schoolery.
For arts of school have there small countenance,
Counted but toys to busy idle brains,
And there professors find small maintenance,
But to be instruments of others' gains,

Nor is there place for any gentle wit
Unless to please it can itself apply.

Even such is all their vaunted vanity,
Naught else but smoke that passeth soon away.

So they themselves for praise of fools do sell,
And all their wealth for painting on a wall.

Whiles single Truth and simple Honesty
Do wander up and down despised of all.”*

And again in his “Mother Hubberd’s Tale,” in the most pithy and masculine verses he ever wrote : —

“Most miserable man, whom wicked Fate
Hath brought to Court to sue for *Had-I-wist*
That few have found and many one hath mist !
Full little knowest thou that hast not tried
What hell it is in suing long to bide ;
To lose good days that might be better spent,
To waste long nights in pensive discontent,
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow,
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow,
To have thy prince’s grace yet want her Peers’,
To have thy asking yet wait many years,
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares,
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs,
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.

Whoever leaves sweet home, where mean estate
In safe assurance, without strife or hate,
Finds all things needful for contentment meek,
And will to Court for shadows vain to seek,

That curse God send unto mine enemy !”†

When Spenser had once got safely back to the secure retreat and serene companionship of his great poem, with what pro-

* Compare Shakespeare’s LXVI. Sonnet.

† This poem, published in 1591, was, Spenser tells us in his dedication, “long sithens composed in the raw concept of my youth.” But he had evidently retouched it. The verses quoted show a firmer hand than is generally seen in it, and we are safe in assuming that they were added after his visit to England. Dr. Johnson epigrammatized Spenser’s indictment into

“There mark what ills the scholar’s life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail,”

but I think it loses in pathos more than it gains in point.

found and pathetic exultation must he have recalled the verses of Dante! —

“ Chi dietro a jura, e chi ad aforismi
 Sen giva, e chi seguendo sacerdozio,
 E chi regnar per forza e per sofismi,
 E chi rubare, e chi civil negozio,
 Chi nei dilette della carne involto
 S’ affaticava, e chi si dava all’ ozio,
 Quando da tutte queste cose sciolto,
 Con Beatrice m’ era suso in cielo
 Cotanto gloriosamente accolto.” *

What Spenser says of the indifference of the court to learning and literature is the more remarkable because he himself was by no means an unsuccessful suitor. Queen Elizabeth bestowed on him a pension of fifty pounds, and shortly after he received the grant of lands already mentioned. It is said, indeed, that Lord Burleigh in some way hindered the advancement of the poet, who more than once directly alludes to him either in reproach or remonstrance. In “The Ruins of Time,” after speaking of the death of Walsingham,

“ Since whose decease learning lies unregarded,
 And men of armes do wander unrewarded,”

he gives the following reason for their neglect :

“ For he that now wields all things at his will,
 Scorns th’ one and th’ other in his deeper skill.
 O grief of griefs! O gall of all good hearts,
 To see that virtue should despised be
 Of him that first was raised for virtuous parts,
 And now, broad-spreading like an aged tree,
 Lets none shoot up that nigh him planted be :
 O let the man of whom the Muse is scorned
 Nor live nor dead be of the Muse adorned ! ”

And in the introduction to the fourth book of the “Faery Queen,” he says again : —

“ The rugged forehead that with grave foresight
 Wields kingdoms’ causes and affairs of state,
 My looser rhymes, I wot, doth sharply wite
 For praising Love, as I have done of late, —

 By which frail youth is oft to folly led
 Through false allurements of that pleasing bait,

* Paradiso, XI. 4–12. Spenser was familiar with the “Divina Commedia,” though I do not remember that his commentators have pointed out his obligations to it.

That better were in virtues disciplined
Than with vain poems' weeds to have their fancies fed.

"Such ones ill judge of love that cannot love
Nor in their frozen hearts feel kindly flame;
Forthy they ought not thing unknown reprove,
Ne natural affection faultless blame
For fault of few that have abused the same:
For it of honor and all virtue is
The root, and brings forth glorious flowers of fame
That crown true lovers with immortal bliss,
The meed of them that love and do not live amiss."

If Lord Burleigh could not relish such a dish of nightingales' tongues as the "Faery Queen," he is very much more to be pitied than Spenser. The sensitive purity of the poet might indeed well be wounded when a poem in which he proposed to himself "to discourse at large" of "the ethick part of Moral Philosophy" * could be so misinterpreted. But Spenser speaks in the same strain and without any other than a general application in his "Tears of the Muses," and his friend Sidney undertakes the defence of poesy because it was undervalued. But undervalued by whom? By the only persons about whom he knew or cared anything, those whom we should now call Society and who were then called the Court. The inference I would draw is that, among the causes which contributed to the marvellous efflorescence of genius in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, the influence of direct patronage from above is to be reckoned at almost nothing.† Then, as when the same phenomenon has happened elsewhere, there must have been a sympathetic public. Literature, properly so called, draws its

* His own words as reported by Lodowick Bryskett. (Todd's Spenser, I. lx.) The whole passage is very interesting as giving us the only glimpse we get of the living Spenser in actual contact with his fellow-men. It shows him to us, as we could wish to see him, surrounded with loving respect, companionable and helpful. Bryskett tells us that he was "perfect in the Greek tongue," and "also very well read in philosophy both moral and natural." He encouraged Bryskett in the study of Greek, and offered to help him in it. Comparing the last verse of the above citation of the "Faery Queen" with other passages in Spenser, I cannot help thinking that he wrote, "do not love amiss."

† "And know, sweet prince, when you shall come to know,
That 'tis not in the power of kings to raise
A spirit for verse that is not born thereto;
Nor are they born in every prince's days."

Daniel's Dedic. Trag. of "Philotas."

sap from the deep soil of human nature's common and everlasting sympathies, the gathered leaf-mould of countless generations (οἷη περ φύλλων γενεή), and not from any top-dressing capriciously scattered over the surface at some master's bidding.* England had long been growing more truly insular in language and political ideas when the Reformation came to precipitate her national consciousness by secluding her more completely from the rest of Europe. Hitherto there had been Englishmen of a distinct type enough, honestly hating foreigners, and reigned over by kings of whom they were proud or not as the case might be, but there was no England as a separate entity from the sovereign who embodied it for the time being. But now an English people began to be dimly aware of itself. Their having got a religion to themselves must have intensified them much as the having a god of their own did the Jews. The exhilaration of relief after the long tension of anxiety, when the Spanish Armada was overwhelmed like the hosts of Pharaoh, while it confirmed their assurance [of a provincial deity, must also have been like sunshine to bring into flower all that there was of imaginative or sentimental in the English nature, already just in the first flush of its spring.

("The yongë sonne
Had in the *Bull* half of his course yronne.")

And just at this moment of blossoming every breeze was dusty with the golden pollen of Greece, Rome, and Italy. If Keats could say, when he first opened Chapman's Homer, —

"Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise," —

if Keats could say this, whose mind had been unconsciously

* Louis XIV. is commonly supposed in some miraculous way to have created French literature. He may more truly be said to have petrified it so far as his influence went. The French *renaissance* in the preceding century was produced by causes similar in essentials to those which brought about that in England not long after. The *grand siècle* grew by natural processes of development out of that which had preceded it, and which, to the impartial foreigner at least, has more flavor, and more French flavor too, than the Gallo-Roman usurper that pushed it from its stool. The best modern French poetry has been forced to temper its verses in the colder natural springs of the ante-classic period.

fed with the results of this culture, — results that permeated all thought, all literature, and all talk, — fancy what must have been the awakening shock and impulse communicated to men's brains by the revelation of this new world of thought and fancy, an unveiling gradual yet sudden, like that of a great organ, which discovered to them what a wondrous instrument was in the soul of man with its epic and lyric stops, its deep thunders of tragedy, and its passionate *vox humana*! It might almost seem as if Shakespeare had typified all this in Miranda, when she cries out at first sight of the king and his courtiers,

“ O, wonder !

How many goodly creatures are there here !

How beauteous mankind is ! O, brave new world

That hath such people in 't ! ”

The civil wars of the Roses had been a barren period in English literature, because they had been merely dynastic squabbles, in which no great principles were involved which could shake all minds with controversy and heat them to intense conviction. A conflict of opposing ambitions wears out the moral no less than the material forces of a people, but the ferment of hostile ideas and convictions may realize resources of character which before were only potential, may transform a merely gregarious multitude into a nation proud in its strength, sensible of the dignity and duty which strength involves, and groping after a common ideal. Some such transformation had been wrought or was going on in England. For the first time a distinct image of her was disengaging itself from the tangled blur of tradition and association in the minds of her children, and it was now only that her great poet could speak exultingly to an audience that would understand him with a passionate sympathy, of

“ This happy breed of men, this little world,

This precious stone set in a silver sea,

This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,

This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,

England, bound in with the triumphant sea ! ”

Such a period can hardly recur again, but something like it, something pointing back to similar producing causes, is observable in the revival of English imaginative literature at the

close of the last and in the early years of the present century. Again, after long fermentation, there was a war of principles, again the national consciousness was heightened and stung by a danger to the national existence, and again there was a crop of great poets and heroic men.

Spenser once more visited England, bringing with him three more books of the "*Faery Queen*," in 1595. He is supposed to have remained there during the two following years.* In 1594 he had been married to the lady celebrated in his somewhat artificial *amoretti*. By her he had four children. He was now at the height of his felicity; by universal acclaim the first poet of his age, and the one obstacle to his material advancement (if obstacle it was) had been put out of the way by the death of Lord Burleigh, August, 1598. In the next month he was recommended in a letter from Queen Elizabeth for the shrievalty of the county of Cork. But alas for Poly-crates! In October the wild kerns and gallowglasses rose in no mood for sparing the house of Pindarus. They sacked and burned his castle, from which he with his wife and children barely escaped.† He sought shelter in London and died there

* I say supposed, for the names of his two sons, Sylvanus and Peregrine, indicate that they were born in Ireland, and that Spenser continued to regard it as a wilderness and his abode there as exile. The two other children are added on the authority of a pedigree drawn up by Sir W. Betham and cited in Mr. Hales's *Life of Spenser* prefixed to the *Globe* edition.

† Ben Jonson told Drummond that one child perished in the flames. But he was speaking after an interval of twenty-one years, and, of course, from hearsay. Spenser's misery was exaggerated by succeeding poets, who used him to point a moral, and from the shelter of his tomb launched many a shaft of sarcasm at an unappreciative public. Giles Fletcher in his "*Purple Island*" (a poem which reminds us of the "*Faery Queen*" by the supreme tediousness of its allegory, but in nothing else) set the example in the best verse he ever wrote:—

"Poorly, poor man, he lived; poorly, poor man, he died."

Gradually this poetical tradition established itself firmly as authentic history. Spenser could never have been poor, except by comparison. The whole story of his later days has a strong savor of legend. He must have had ample warning of Tyrone's rebellion, and would probably have sent away his wife and children to Cork, if he did not go thither himself. I am inclined to think that he did, carrying his papers with him, and among them the two cantos of *Mutability*, first published in 1611. These, it is most likely, were the only ones he ever completed, for, with all his abundance, he was evidently a laborious finisher. When we remember that ten years were given to the elaboration of the first three books, and that five more elapsed before the next three were ready, we shall waste no vain regrets on the six concluding books supposed to have been lost by the carelessness of an imaginary servant on their way from Ireland.

on the 16th January, 1599, at a tavern in King Street, Westminster. He was buried in the neighboring Abbey next to Chaucer, at the cost of the Earl of Essex, poets bearing his pall and casting verses into his grave. He died poor, but not in want. On the whole, his life may be reckoned a happy one, as in the main the lives of the great poets must have commonly been. If they feel more passionately the pang of the moment, so also the compensations are incalculable, and not the least of them this very capacity of passionate emotion. The real good fortune is to be measured, not by more or less of outward prosperity, but by the opportunity given for the development and free play of the genius. It should be remembered that the power of expression which exaggerates their griefs is also no inconsiderable consolation for them. We should measure what Spenser says of his worldly disappointments by the bitterness of the unavailing tears he shed for Rosalind. A careful analysis of these leaves no perceptible residuum of salt, and we are tempted to believe that the passion itself was not much more real than the pastoral accessories of pipe and crook. I very much doubt whether Spenser ever felt more than one profound passion in his life, and that luckily was for his "Faery Queen." He was fortunate in the friendship of the best men and women of his time, in the seclusion which made him free of the still better society of the past, in the loving recognition of his countrymen. All that we know of him is amiable and of good report. He was faithful to the friendships of his youth, pure in his loves, unspotted in his life. Above all, the ideal with him was not a thing apart and unattainable, but the sweetener and ennobler of the street and the fireside.

There are two ways of measuring a poet, either by an absolute æsthetic standard, or relatively to his position in the literary history of his country and the conditions of his generation. Both should be borne in mind as coefficients in a perfectly fair judgment. If his positive merit is to be settled irrevocably by the former, yet an intelligent criticism will find its advantage not only in considering what he was, but what, under the given circumstances, it was possible for him to be.

The fact that the great poem of Spenser was inspired by the Orlando of Ariosto, and written in avowed emulation of it, and

that the poet almost always needs to have his fancy set agoing by the hint of some predecessor, must not lead us to overlook his manifest claim to originality. It is not what a poet takes, but what he makes out of what he has taken, that shows what native force is in him. Above all, did his mind dwell complacently in those forms and fashions which in their very birth are already obsolescent, or was it instinctively drawn to those qualities which are permanent in language and whatever is wrought in it? There is much in Spenser that is contemporary and evanescent; but the substance of him is durable, and his work was the deliberate result of intelligent purpose and ample culture. The publication of his "Shepherd's Calendar" in 1579 (though the poem itself be of little interest) is one of the epochs in our literature. Spenser had at least the originality to see clearly and to feel keenly that it was essential to bring poetry back again to some kind of understanding with nature. His immediate predecessors seem to have conceived of it as a kind of bird of paradise, born to float somewhere between heaven and earth, with no very well defined relation to either. It is true that the nearest approach they were able to make to this airy ideal was a shuttlecock, winged with a bright plume or so from Italy, but, after all, nothing but cork and feathers, which they banded back and forth from one stanza to another, with the useful ambition of *keeping it up* as long as they could. To my mind the old comedy of "Gammer Gurton's Needle" is worth the whole of them. It may be coarse, earthy, but in reading it one feels that he is at least a man among men, and not a humbug among humbugs.

The form of Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar," it is true, is artificial, absurdly so if you look at it merely from the outside, — not, perhaps, the wisest way to look at anything, unless it be a jail or a volume of the "Congressional Globe," — but the spirit of it is fresh and original. We have at last got over the superstition that shepherds and shepherdesses are any wiser or simpler than other people. We know that wisdom can be won only by wide commerce with men and books, and that simplicity, whether of manners or style, is the crowning result of the highest culture. But the pastorals of Spenser were very different things, different both in the moving spirit and the

resultant form from the later ones of Browne or the "Piscatory Eclogues" of Phineas Fletcher. And why? Browne and Fletcher wrote because Spenser had written, but Spenser wrote from a strong inward impulse — an instinct it might be called — to escape at all risks into the fresh air from that horrible atmosphere into which rhymer after rhymer had been pumping carbonic-acid gas with the full force of his lungs, and in which all sincerity was on the edge of suffocation. His longing for something truer and better was as honest as that which led Tacitus so long before to idealize the Germans, and Rousseau so long after to make an angel of the savage.

Spenser himself supremely overlooks the whole chasm between himself and Chaucer, as Dante between himself and Virgil. He called Chaucer master, as Milton was afterwards to call *him*. And, even while he chose the most artificial of all forms, his aim — that of getting back to nature and life — was conscious, I have no doubt, to himself, and must be obvious to whoever reads with anything but the ends of his fingers. It is true that Sannazzaro had brought the pastoral into fashion again, and that two of Spenser's are little more than translations from Marot; but for manner he instinctively turned back to Chaucer, the first and then only great English poet. He has given common instead of classic names to his personages, for characters they can hardly be called. Above all, he has gone to the provincial dialects for words wherewith to enlarge and freshen his poetical vocabulary.* I look upon the "Shepherd's Calendar" as being no less a conscious and deliberate attempt at reform than Thomson's "Seasons" were in the topics, and Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads" in the language of poetry. But the great merit of these pastorals was

* Sir Philip Sidney did not approve of this. "That same framing of his style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazzaro in Italian did affect it." ("Defence of Poesy.") Ben Jonson, on the other hand, said that Guarini "kept not decorum in making shepherds speak as well as himself could." ("Conversations with Drummond.") I think Sidney was right, for the poets' Arcadia is a purely ideal world, and should be treated accordingly. But whoever looks into the glossary appended to the "Calendar" by E. K., will be satisfied that Spenser's object was to find unhackneyed and poetical words rather than such as should seem more on a level with the speakers. See also the "Epistle Dedicatory." I cannot help thinking that E. K. was Spenser himself, with occasional interjections of Harvey. Who else could have written such English as many passages in this Epistle?

not so much in their matter as their manner. They show a sense of style in its larger meaning hitherto displayed by no English poet since Chaucer. Surrey had brought back from Italy a certain inkling of it, so far as it is contained in decorum. But here was a new language, a choice and arrangement of words, a variety, elasticity, and harmony of verse most grateful to the ears of men. If not passion, there was fervor, which was perhaps as near it as the somewhat stately movement of Spenser's mind would allow him to come. Sidney had tried many experiments in versification, which are curious and interesting, especially his attempts to naturalize the *sliding* rhymes of Sannazzaro in English. But there is everywhere the uncertainty of a 'prentice hand. Spenser shows himself already a master, at least in verse, and we can trace the studies of Milton, a yet greater master, in the "Shepherd's Calendar" as well as in the "Faery Queen." We have seen that Spenser, under the misleading influence of Sidney* and Harvey, tried his hand at English hexameters. But his great glory is that he taught his own language to sing and move to measures harmonious and noble. Chaucer had done much to vocalize it, as I have tried to show elsewhere,† but Spenser was to prove

"That no tongue hath the muse's utterance heired
For verse, and that sweet music to the ear
Struck out of rhyme, so naturally as this."

The "Shepherd's Calendar" contains perhaps the most picturesquely imaginative verse which Spenser has written. It is in the eclogue for February, where he tells us of the

"Faded oak
Whose body is sere, whose branches broke,
Whose naked arms stretch unto the fire."

It is one of those verses that Joseph Warton would have liked in secret, that Dr. Johnson would have proved to be untranslatable into reasonable prose, and which the imagination welcomes at once without caring whether it be exactly conformable to *barbara* or *celarent*. Another pretty verse in the same eclogue,

"But gently took that ungently came,"

* It was at Penshurst that he wrote the only specimen that has come down to us, and bad enough it is. I have said that some of Sidney's are pleasing.

† See "North American Review," Vol. CXI. 155.

pleased Coleridge so greatly that he thought it was his own. But in general it is not so much the sentiments and images that are new as the modulation of the verses in which they float. The cold obstruction of two centuries thaws, and the stream of speech, once more let loose, seeks out its old windings, or overflows musically in unpractised channels. The service which Spenser did to our literature by this exquisite sense of harmony is incalculable. His fine ear, abhorrent of barbarous dissonance, his dainty tongue that loves to prolong the relish of a musical phrase, made possible the transition from the cast-iron stiffness of "Ferrex and Porrex" to the Damascus pliancy of Fletcher and Shakespeare. It was he that

" Taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly :
That added feathers to the learned's wing,
And gave to grace a double majesty."

I do not mean that in the "Shepherd's Calendar" he had already achieved that transmutation of language and metre by which he was afterwards to endow English verse with the most varied and majestic of stanzas, in which the droning old alexandrine, awakened for the first time to a feeling of the poetry that was in him, was to wonder, like M. Jourdain, that he had been talking prose all his life,—but already he gave clear indications of the tendency and premonitions of the power which were to carry it forward to ultimate perfection. A harmony and alacrity of language like this were unexampled in English verse : —

" Ye dainty nymphs, that in this blessed brook
Do bathe your breast,
Forsake your watery bowers and hither look
At my request. . . .
And eke you virgins that on Parnass dwell,
Whence floweth Helicon, the learned well,
Help me to blaze
Her worthy praise,
Which in her sex doth all excel."

Here we have the natural gait of the measure, somewhat formal and slow, as befits an invocation ; and now mark how the same feet shall be made to quicken their pace at the bidding of the tune : —

"Bring here the pink and purple columbine,
 With gilliflowers;
 Bring coronations and sops in wine,
 Worne of paramours;
 Strow me the ground with daffadowndillies,
 And cowslips and kingcúps and loved lilies;
 The pretty paunce
 And the chevisance
 Shall match with the fair flowërdelice." *

The argument prefixed by E. K. to the tenth Eclogue has a special interest for us as showing how high a conception Spenser had of poetry and the poet's office. By Cuddy he evidently means himself, though choosing out of modesty another name instead of the familiar Colin. "In Cuddy is set forth the perfect pattern of a Poet, which, finding no maintenance of his state and studies, complaineth of the contempt of Poetry and the causes thereof, specially having been in all ages, and even amongst the most barbarous, always of singular account and honor, *and being indeed so worthy and commendable an art, or rather no art, but a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labor and learning, but adorned with both, and poured into the wit by a certain Enthousiasmos and celestial inspiration*, as the author hereof elsewhere at large discourseth in his book called THE ENGLISH POET, which book being lately come into my hands, I mind also by God's grace, upon further advise-

* Of course *dillies* and *lilies* must be read with a slight accentuation of the last syllable (permissible then), in order to chime with *delice*. In the first line I have put *here* instead of *hether*, which (like other words where *th* comes between two vowels) was then very often a monosyllable, in order to throw the accent back more strongly on *bring*, where it belongs. Spenser's innovation lies in making his verses by ear instead of on the finger-tips, and in valuing the stave more than any of the single verses that compose it. This is the secret of his easy superiority to all others in the stanza which he composed, and which bears his name. Milton (who got more of his schooling in these matters from Spenser than anywhere else) gave this principle a greater range, and applied it with more various mastery. I have little doubt that the tune of the last stanza cited above was clinging in Shakespeare's ear when he wrote those exquisite verses in "Midsummer Night's Dream" ("I know a bank"), where our grave pentameter is in like manner surprised into a lyrical movement. See also the pretty song in the eclogue for August. Ben Jonson, too, evidently caught some cadences from Spenser for his lyrics. I need hardly say that in those eclogues (May, for example) where Spenser thought he was imitating what wiseacres used to call the *riding-rhyme* of Chaucer, he fails most lamentably. He had evidently learned to scan his master's verses better when he wrote his "Mother Hubberd's Tale."

ment, to publish." E. K., whoever he was, never carried out his intention, and the book is no doubt lost; a loss to be borne with less equanimity than that of Cicero's treatise *De Gloria*, once possessed by Petrarch. The passage I have italicized is most likely an extract, and reminds one of the long-breathed periods of Milton. Drummond of Hawthornden tells us, "he [Ben Jonson] hath by heart some verses of Spenser's 'Calendar,' about wine, between Coline and Percy" (Cuddie and Piers).^{*} These verses are in this eclogue, and are worth quoting both as having the approval of dear old Ben, the best critic of the day, and because they are a good sample of Spenser's earlier verse:—

"Thou kenst not, Percie, how the rhyme should rage;
O, if my temples were distained with wine,
And girt in garlands of wild ivy-twine,
How I could rear the Muse on stately stage
And teach her tread aloft in buskin fine
With quaint Bellona in her equiPAGE!"

In this eclogue he gives hints of that spacious style which was to distinguish him, and which, like his own Fame,

"With golden wings aloft doth fly
Above the reach of ruinous decay,
And with brave plumes doth beat the azure sky,
Admired of base-born men from far away."†

^{*} Drummond, it will be remarked, speaking from memory, takes Cuddy to be Colin. In Milton's "Lycidas" there are reminiscences of this eclogue as well as of that for May. The latter are the more evident, but I think that Spenser's

suggested Milton's "Cuddie, the praise is better than the price,"

"But not the praise,
Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears."
Shakespeare had read and remembered this pastoral. Compare

"But, ah, Mécænas is yclad in clay,
And great Augustus long ago is dead,
And all the worthies ligger wrapt in lead,"

with

"King Pandion, he is dead;
All thy friends are lapt in lead."

It is odd that Shakespeare, in his "lapt in lead," is more Spenserian than Spenser himself, from whom he caught this "hunting of the letter."

† "Ruins of Time." It is perhaps not considering too nicely to remark how often this image of *wings* recurred to Spenser's mind. A certain aerial latitude was essential to the large circlings of his style.

He was letting his wings grow, as Milton said, and foreboding the "Faery Queen":—

"Lift thyself up out of the lowly dust

To 'doubted knights whose woundless armor rusts

And helms unbruised waxen daily brown :

There may thy Muse display her fluttering wing,

And stretch herself at large from East to West."

Verses like these, especially the last (which Dryden would have liked), were such as English ears had not yet heard, and curiously prophetic of the maturer man. The language and verse of Spenser at his best have an ideal lift in them, and there is scarce any of our poets who can so hardly help being poetical.

It was this instantly felt if not easily definable charm that forthwith won for Spenser his never-disputed rank as the chief of English poets, and gave him a popularity which, during his life and in the following generation, was, in its select quality, without a competitor. It may be thought that I lay too much stress on this single attribute of diction. But apart from its importance in his case as showing their way to the poets who were just then learning the accidence of their art, and leaving them a material to work in already mellowed to their hands, it should be remembered that it is subtle perfection of phrase and that happy coalescence of music and meaning, where each reinforces the other, that define a man as poet and make all ears converts and partisans. Spenser was an epicure in language. He loved "seld-seen costly" words perhaps too well, and did not always distinguish between mere strangeness and that novelty which is so agreeable as to cheat us with some charm of seeming association. He had not the concentrated power which can sometimes pack infinite riches in the little room of a single epithet, for his genius is rather for dilatation than compression.* But he was, with the exception of Milton and

* Perhaps his most striking single epithet is the "sea-shouldering whales," B. II. 12, xxiii. His ear seems to delight in prolongations. For example, he makes such words as *glorious*, *gratious*, *joyeous*, *havior*, *chapelet* dactyles, and that, not at the end of verses, where it would not have been unusual, but in the first half of them. Milton contrives a break (a kind of heave, as it were) in the uniformity of his verse by a practice exactly the opposite of this. He also shuns a

possibly Gray, the most learned of our poets. His familiarity with ancient and modern literature was easy and intimate, and as he perfected himself in his art, he caught the grand manner and high-bred ways of the society he frequented. Even to the last he did not quite shake off the blunt rusticity of phrase that was habitual with the generation that preceded him. In the fifth book of the "Faery Queen," where he is describing the passion of Britomart at the supposed infidelity of Arthegall, he descends to a Teniers-like realism,* — he whose verses generally remind us of the dancing Hours of Guido, where we catch but a glimpse of the real earth and that far away beneath. But his habitual style is that of gracious loftiness and refined luxury.

He first shows his mature hand in the "Muiopotmos," the most airily fanciful of his poems, a marvel for delicate conception and treatment, whose breezy verse seems to float between a blue sky and golden earth in imperishable sunshine. No other English poet has found the variety and compass which enlivened the octave stanza under his sensitive touch. It can hardly be doubted that in Clarion the butterfly he has symbolized himself, and surely never was the poetic temperament so picturesquely exemplified: —

"Over the fields, in his frank lustiness,
And all the champain o'er, he soared light,

hiatus which does not seem to have been generally displeasing to Spenser's ear, though perhaps in the compound epithet *bees-alluring* he intentionally avoids it by the plural form.

* "Like as a wayward child, whose sounder sleep
Is broken with some fearful dream's affright,
With froward will doth set himself to weep
Ne can be stilled for all his nurse's might,
But kicks and squalls and shrieks for fell despight,
Now scratching her and her loose locks misusing,
Now seeking darkness and now seeking light,
Then craving suck, and then the suck refusing."

He would doubtless have justified himself by the familiar example of Homer's comparing Ajax to a donkey in the eleventh book of the *Iliad*. So also in the "Epithalamion" it grates our nerves to hear,

"Pour not by cups, but by the bellyful,
Pour out to all that wull."

Such examples serve to show how strong a dose of Spenser's *aurum potabile* the language needed.

And all the country wide he did possess,
Feeding upon their pleasures bounteously,
That none gainsaid and none did him envy.

“The woods, the rivers, and the meadows green,
With his air-cutting wings he measured wide,
Nor did he leave the mountains bare unseen,
Nor the rank grassy fens’ delights untried;
But none of these, however sweet they been,
Mote please his fancy, or him cause to abide;
His choiceful sense with every change doth flit;
No common things may please a wavering wit.

“To the gay gardens his unstaied desire
Him wholly carried, to refresh his sprights;
There lavish Nature, in her best attire,
Pours forth sweet odors and alluring sights,
And Art, with her contending doth aspire,
To excel the natural with made delights;
And all that fair or pleasant may be found,
In riotous excess doth there abound.

“There he arriving, round about doth flie,
From bed to bed, from one to the other border,
And takes survey with curious busy eye,
Of every flower and herb there set in order,
Now this, now that, he tasteth tenderly,
Yet none of them he rudely doth disorder,
Ne with his feet their silken leaves displace,
But pastures on the pleasures of each place.

“And evermore with most variety
And change of sweetness (for all change is sweet)
He casts his glutton sense to satisfy,
Now sucking of the sap of herbs most meet,
Or of the dew which yet on them doth lie,
Now in the same bathing his tender feet;
And then he percheth on some branch thereby
To weather him and his moist wings to dry.

“And then again he turneth to his play,
To spoil [plunder] the pleasures of that paradise;
The wholesome sage, the lavender still gray,
Rank-smelling rue, and cummin good for eyes,
The roses reigning in the pride of May,
Sharp hyssop good for green wounds’ remedies
Fair marigolds, and bees-alluring thyme,
Sweet marjoram and daisies decking prime,

“Cool violets, and orpine growing still,
 Embathèd balm, and cheerful galingale,
 Fresh costmary and breathful camomill,
 Dull poppy and drink-quickenning setuale,
 Vein-healing vervain and head-purging dill,
 Sound savory, and basil hearty-hale,
 Fat coleworts and comforting perseline,
 Cold lettuce, and refreshing rosemarine.*

“And whatso else of virtue good or ill,
 Grew in this garden, fetched from far away,
 Of every one he takes and tastes at will,
 And on their pleasures greedily doth prey;
 Then, when he hath both played and fed his fill,
 In the warm sun he doth himself embay,
 And there him rests in riotous suffisance
 Of all his gladfulness and kingly ioyance.

“What more felicity can fall to creature
 Than to enjoy delight with liberty,
 And to be lord of all the works of nature?
 To reign in the air from earth to highest sky,
 To feed on flowers and weeds of glorious feature,
 To take whatever thing doth please the eye?
 Who rests not pleasèd with such happiness,
 Well worthy he to taste of wretchedness.”

The “*Muiopotmos*” pleases us all the more that it vibrates in us a string of classical association by adding an episode to Ovid’s story of *Arachne*. “Talking the other day with a friend (the late Mr. Keats) about Dante, he observed that whenever so great a poet told us anything in addition or continuation of an ancient story, he had a right to be regarded as classical authority. For instance, said he, when he tells us of that characteristic death of Ulysses, . . . we ought to receive the information as authentic, and be glad that we have more news of Ulysses than we looked for.”† We can hardly doubt that Ovid would have been glad to admit this exquisitely fantastic illumination into his margin.

* I could not bring myself to root out this odorous herb-garden, though it make my extract too long. It is a pretty reminiscence of his master Chaucer, but is also very characteristic of Spenser himself. He could not help planting a flower or two among his serviceable plants, and after all this abundance he is not satisfied, but begins the next stanza with “And whatso *else*.”

† Leigh Hunt’s *Indicator*, XVII.

No German analyzer of æsthetics has given us so convincing a definition of the artistic nature as these radiant verses. "To reign in the air" was certainly Spenser's function. And yet the commentators, who seem never willing to let their poet be a poet pure and simple, though, had he not been so, they would have lost their only hold upon life, try to make out from his "Mother Hubbard's Tale" that he might have been a very sensible matter-of-fact man if he would. For my own part, I am quite willing to confess that I like him none the worse for being *unpractical*, and that my reading has convinced me that being too poetical is the rarest fault of poets. Practical men are not so scarce, one would think, and I am not sure that the tree was a gainer when the hamadryad flitted and left it nothing but ship-timber. Such men as Spenser are not sent into the world to be part of its motive power. The blind old engine would not know the difference though we got up its steam with attar of roses, nor make one revolution more to the minute for it. What practical man ever left such an heirloom to his countrymen as the "Faery Queen"?

Undoubtedly Spenser wished to be useful and in the highest vocation of all, that of teacher, and Milton calls him "our sage and serious poet, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas." And good Dr. Henry More was of the same mind. I fear he makes his vices so beautiful now and then that we should not be very much afraid of them if we chanced to meet them; for he could not escape from his genius, which, if it led him as philosopher to the abstract contemplation of the beautiful, left him as poet open to every impression of sensuous delight. When he wrote the "Shepherd's Calendar" he was certainly a Puritan, and probably so by conviction rather than from any social influences or thought of personal interests. There is a verse, it is true, in the second of the two detached cantos of "Mutability,"

"Like that ungracious crew which feigns demurest grace,"

which is supposed to glance at the straiter religionists, and from which it has been inferred that he drew away from them as he grew older. It is very likely that years and widened experience of men may have produced in him their natural

result of tolerant wisdom which revolts at the hasty destructiveness of inconsiderate zeal. But with the more generous side of Puritanism I think he sympathized to the last. His rebukes of clerical worldliness are in the Puritan tone, and as severe a one as any is in "*Mother Hubbard's Tale*," published in 1591.* There is an iconoclastic relish in his account of Sir Guyon's demolishing the Bower of Bliss that makes us think he would not have regretted the plundered abbeys as perhaps Shakespeare did when he speaks of the winter woods as "bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang": —

"But all those pleasant bowers and palace brave
Guyon broke down with rigor pitiless,
Ne ought their goodly workmanship might save
Them from the tempest of his wrathfulness,
But that their bliss he turned to balefulness;
Their groves he felled, their gardens did deface,
Their arbors spoil, their cabinets suppress,
Their banquet-houses burn, their buildings rase,
And of the fairest late now made the foulest place."

But whatever may have been Spenser's religious opinions (which do not nearly concern us here), the bent of his mind was toward a Platonic mysticism, a supramundane sphere where it could shape universal forms out of the primal elements of things, instead of being forced to put up with their fortuitous combinations in the unwilling material of mortal clay. He who, when his singing robes were on, could never be tempted nearer to the real world than under some subterfuge of pastoral or allegory, expatiates joyously in this untrammelled ether: —

"Lifting himself out of the lowly dust
On golden plumes up to the purest sky."

Nowhere does his genius soar and sing with such continuous aspiration, nowhere is his phrase so decorously stately, though

* Ben Jonson told Drummond "that in that paper Sir W. Raleigh had of the allegories of his Faery Queen, by the Blatant Beast the Puritans were understood." But this is certainly wrong. There were very different shades of Puritanism, according to individual temperament. That of Winthrop and Higginson had a mellowness of which Endicott and Standish were incapable. The gradual change of Milton's opinions was similar to that which I suppose in Spenser. The passage in *Mother Hubbard* may have been aimed at the Protestant clergy of Ireland (for he says much the same thing in his "*View of the State of Ireland*"), but it is general in its terms.

rising to an enthusiasm which reaches intensity while it stops short of vehemence, as in his Hymns to Love and Beauty, especially the latter. There is an exulting spurn of earth in it, as of a soul just loosed from its cage. I shall make no extracts from it, for it is one of those intimately coherent and transcendently logical poems that "moveth altogether if it move at all," the breaking off a fragment from which would maim it as it would a perfect group of crystals. Whatever there is of sentiment and passion is for the most part purely disembodied and without sex, like that of angels, — a kind of poetry which has of late gone out of fashion, whether to our gain or not may be questioned. Perhaps one may venture to hint that the animal instincts are those that stand in least need of stimulation. Spenser's notions of love were so nobly pure, so far from those of our common ancestor who could hang by his tail, as not to disqualify him for achieving the quest of the Holy Grail, and accordingly it is not uninstrusive to remember that he had drunk, among others, at French sources not yet deboshed with *absinthe*.* Yet, with a purity like that of thrice-bolted snow, he had none of its coldness. He is, of all our poets, the most truly sensuous, using the word as Milton probably meant it when he said that poetry should be "simple, sensuous, and passionate." A poet is innocently sensuous when his mind permeates and illumines his senses; when they, on the other hand, muddy the mind, he becomes sensual. Every one of Spenser's senses was as exquisitely alive to the impressions of material, as every organ of his soul was to those of spiritual, beauty. Accordingly, if he painted the weeds of sensuality at all, he could not help making them "of glorious feature." It was this, it may be suspected, rather than his "praising love," that made Lord Burleigh shake his "rugged forehead." Spenser's gamut, indeed, is a wide one, ranging from a purely corporeal delight in "precious odors fetched from far away" upward to such refinement as

* Two of his eclogues, as I have said, are from Marot, and his earliest known verses are translations from Bellay, a poet who was charming whenever he had the courage to play truant from a bad school. We must not suppose that an analysis of the literature of the *demi-monde* will give us all the elements of the French character. It has been both grave and profound; nay, it has even contrived to be wise and lively at the same time, a combination so incomprehensible by the Teutonic races that they have labelled it levity. It puts them out as Nature did Fuseli.

Upon her eyelids many graces sate
Under the shadow of her even brows,"

where the eye shares its pleasure with the mind. He is court-painter in ordinary to each of the senses in turn, and idealizes these frail favorites of his majesty King Lusty Juventus, till they half believe themselves the innocent shepherdesses into which he travesties them.*

In his great poem he had two objects in view: first, the ephemeral one of pleasing the court, and then that of recommending himself to the permanent approval of his own and following ages as a poet, and especially as a moral poet. To meet the first demand, he lays the scene of his poem in contemporary England, and brings in all the leading personages of the day under the thin disguise of his knights and their squires and lady-loves. He says this expressly in the prologue to the second book:—

"Of Faery Land yet if he more inquire,
By certain signs, here set in sundry place,
He may it find;
And thou, O fairest princess under sky,
In this fair mirror mayst behold thy face
And thine own realms in land of Faery."

Many of his personages we can still identify, and all of them were once as easily recognizable as those of *Mademoiselle de Scudéry*. This, no doubt, added greatly to the immediate piquancy of the allusions. The interest they would excite may be inferred from the fact that King James, in 1596, wished to have the author prosecuted and punished for his indecent handling of his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, under the name of

* Taste must be partially excepted. It is remarkable how little eating and drinking there is in the "*Faery Queen*." The only time he fairly sets a table is in the house of Malbecco, where it is necessary to the conduct of the story. Yet taste is not wholly forgotten:—

"In her left hand a cup of gold she held,
And with her right the riper fruit did reach,
Whose sappy liquor, that with fulness sweld,
Into her cup she scrused with dainty breach
Of her fine fingers without foul impeach,
That so fair wine-press made the wine more sweet."

B. II. c. xii. 56.

Taste can hardly complain of unhandsome treatment!

Duessa.* To suit the wider application of his plan's other and more important half, Spenser made all his characters double their parts, and appear in his allegory as the impersonations of abstract moral qualities. When the cardinal and theological virtues tell Dante,

"Noi siam qui ninfe e in ciel siamo stelle,"

the sweetness of the verse enables the fancy, by a slight gulp, to swallow without solution the problem of being in two places at the same time. But there is something fairly ludicrous in such a duality as that of Prince Arthur and the Earl of Leicester, Arthegall and Lord Grey, and Belpheobe and Elizabeth.

"In this same interlude it doth befall

That I, one Snout by name, present a wall."

The reality seems to heighten the improbability, already hard enough to manage. But Spenser had fortunately almost as little sense of humor as Wordsworth,† or he could never have carried his poem on with enthusiastic good faith so far as he did. It is evident that to him the Land of Faery was an unreal world of picture and illusion,

"The world's sweet inn from pain and wearisome turmoil,"

in which he could shut himself up from the actual, with its shortcomings and failures.

"The ways through which my weary steps I guide

In this delightful land of Faery

Are so exceeding spacious and wide,

And sprinkled with such sweet variety

Of all that pleasant is to ear and eye,

* Had the poet lived longer, he might perhaps have verified his friend Raleigh's saying, that "whosoever in writing modern history shall follow truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth." The passage is one of the very few disgusting ones in the "Faery Queen." Spenser was copying Ariosto; but the Italian poet, with the discreeter taste of his race, keeps to generalities. Spenser goes into particulars which can only be called nasty. He did this, no doubt, to please his mistress, Mary's rival; and this gives us a measure of the brutal coarseness of contemporary manners. It becomes only the more marvellous that the fine flower of his genius could have transmuted the juices of such a soil into the purity and sweetness which are its own peculiar properties.

† There is a gleam of humor in one of the couplets of "Mother Hubbard's Tale," where the Fox, persuading the Ape that they should disguise themselves as discharged soldiers in order to beg the more successfully, says, —

"Be you the soldier, for you likest are

For manly semblance *and small skill in war.*"

That I, nigh ravisht with rare thoughts' delight,
My tedious travail do forget thereby,
And, when I 'gin to feel decay of might,
It strength to me supplies, and cheers my dull'd spright."

Spenser seems here to confess a little weariness; but the alacrity of his mind is so great that, even where his invention fails a little, we do not share his feeling nor suspect it, charmed as we are by the variety and sweep of his measure, the beauty or vigor of his similes, the musical felicity of his diction, and the mellow versatility of his pictures. In this last quality Ariosto, whose emulous pupil he was, is as Bologna to Venice in the comparison. That, when the personal allusions have lost their meaning and the allegory has become a burden, the book should continue to be read with delight, is proof enough, were any wanting, how full of life and light and the other-worldliness of poetry it must be. As a narrative it has, I think, every fault of which that kind of writing is capable. The characters are vague, and, even were they not, they drop out of the story so often and remain out of it so long, that we have forgotten who they are when we meet them again; the episodes hinder the advance of the action instead of relieving it with variety of incident or novelty of situation; the plot, if plot it may be called,

"That shape has none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,"

recalls drearily our ancient enemy, the Metrical Romance; while the fighting, which, in those old poems, was tediously sincere, is between shadow and shadow, where we know that neither can harm the other, though we are tempted to wish he might. Hazlitt bids us not mind the allegory, and says that it won't bite us nor meddle with us if we do not meddle with it. But how if it bore us, which after all is the fatal question? The truth is that it is too often forced upon us against our will, as people were formerly driven to church till they began to look on a day of rest as a penal institution, and to transfer to the Scriptures that suspicion of defective inspiration which was awakened in them by the preaching. The true type of the allegory is the Odyssey, which we read without suspicion as pure poem, and then find a new pleasure in divining the

double meaning, as if we somehow got a better bargain of our author than he meant to give us. But this complex feeling must not be so exacting as to prevent our lapsing into the old Arabian Nights simplicity of interest again. The moral of a poem should be suggested, as when, in some mediæval church we cast down our eyes to muse over some fresco of Giotto, and are reminded of the transitoriness of life by the mortuary tablets under our feet. The vast superiority of Bunyan over Spenser lies in the fact that we help make his allegory out of our own experience. Instead of striving to embody abstract passions and temptations, he has given us his own in all their pathetic simplicity. He is the Ulysses of his own prose-epic. This is the secret of his power and his charm, that, while the representation of what *may* happen to all men comes home to none of us in particular, the story of any one man's real experience finds its startling parallel in that of every one of us. The very homeliness of Bunyan's names and the everydayness of his scenery, too, put us off our guard, and we soon find ourselves on as easy a footing with his allegorical beings as we might be with Adam or Socrates in a dream. Indeed, he had prepared us for such incongruities by telling us at setting out that the story was of a dream. The long nights of Bedford jail had so intensified his imagination, and made the figures with which it peopled his solitude so real to him, that the creatures of his mind become *things*, as clear to the memory as if we had seen them. But Spenser's are too often mere names, with no bodies to back them, entered on the Muses' muster-roll by the specious trick of personification. There is, likewise, in Bunyan, a child-like simplicity and taking-for-granted which win our confidence. His Giant Despair,* for example, is by no means the Ossianic figure into which artists who mistake the vague for the sublime have misconceived it. He is the ogre of the fairy-tales, with his malicious wife; and he comes forth to us from those regions of early faith and wonder as something beforehand accepted by the imagination. These figures of Bunyan's are already familiar inmates of the mind, and, if there be any sublimity in him, it is the daring frankness

* Bunyan probably took the hint of the Giant's suicidal offer of "knife, halter, or poison," from Spenser's "swords, ropes, poison," in *Faery Queen*, B. I. c. ix. 1.

of his verisimilitude. Spenser's giants are those of the later romances, except that grand figure with the balances in the second Canto of Book V., the most original of all his conceptions, yet no real giant, but a pure eidolon of the mind. As Bunyan rises not seldom to a natural poetry, so Spenser sinks now and then, through the fault of his topics, to unmistakable prose. Take his description of the House of Alma,* for instance : —

“ The master cook was cald Concoctiön,
A careful man, and full of comely guise ;
The kitchen-clerk, that hight Digestiön,
Did order all the achates in seemly wise.”

And so on through all the organs of the body. The author of *Ecclesiastes* understood these matters better in that last pathetic chapter of his, blunderingly translated as it apparently is. This, I admit, is the worst failure of Spenser in this kind ; though, even here, when he gets on to the organs of the mind, the enchantments of his fancy and style come to the rescue and put us in good-humor again, hard as it is to conceive of armed knights entering the chamber of the mind, and talking with such visionary damsels as Ambition and Shamefastness. Nay, even in the most prosy parts, unless my partiality deceive me, there is an infantile confidence in the magical powers of *Proso-popœia* which half beguiles us, as of children who *play* that everything is something else, and are quite satisfied with the transformation.

The problem for Spenser was a double one : how to commend poetry at all to a generation which thought it effeminate trifling,† and how he, Master Edmund Spenser, of imagination all compact, could commend *his* poetry to Master John Bull, the most practical of mankind, but at that moment in a passion of religious anxiety about his soul. *Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci* was not only an irrefragable axiom because a Latin poet had said it, but it exactly met the case in point. He would convince the scorers that poetry might be seriously useful, and show Master Bull his new way of making fine words butter parsnips, in a rhymed moral primer. Allegory, as then

* Book II. c. 9.

† See Sidney's "Defense," and Puttenham's "Art of English Poesy," Book I. c. 8.

practised, was imagination adapted for beginners, in words of one syllable and illustrated with cuts, and would thus serve both his ethical and pictorial purpose. Such a primer, or a first instalment of it, he proceeded to give them; but he so bordered it with bright-colored fancies, he so often filled whole pages and crowded the text hard in others with the gay frolics of his pencil, that, as in the Grimani missal, the holy function of the book is forgotten in the ecstasy of its adornment. Worse than all, does not his brush linger more lovingly along the rosy contours of his sirens than on the modest wimples of the Wise Virgins? "The general end of the book," he tells us in his Dedication to Sir Walter Raleigh, "is to fashion a gentleman of noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." But a little further on he evidently has a qualm, as he thinks how generously he had interpreted his promise of cuts: "To some I know this method will seem displeasing, which had rather have good discipline delivered plainly in way of precepts or sermoned at large,* as they use, than thus cloudily enwrapped in allegorical devices." Lord Burleigh was of this way of thinking, undoubtedly, but how could poor Clarion help it? Has he not said,

" And whatso else, of *virtue good or ill*,
 Grew in that garden, fetcht from far away,
 Of every one he takes and tastes at will,
 And on their pleasures greedily doth prey " ?

One sometimes feels in reading him as if he were the pure sense of the beautiful incarnated to the one end that he might interpret it to our duller perceptions. So exquisite was his sensibility,† that with him sensation and intellection seem identical, and we "can almost say his body thought." This subtle interfusion of sense with spirit it is that gives his poetry a crystalline purity without lack of warmth. He is full of feeling, and yet of such a kind that we can neither say it is mere intellectual perception of what is fair and good, nor yet associ-

* We can fancy how he would have done this by Jeremy Taylor, who was a kind of Spenser in a cassock.

† Of this he himself gives a striking hint, where speaking in his own person he suddenly breaks in on his narrative with the passionate cry,

" Ah, dearest God, me grant I dead be not defouled."

Faery Queen, B. I. c. x. 43.

ate it with that throbbing fervor which leads us to call sensibility by the physical name of heart.

Charles Lamb made the most pithy criticism of Spenser when he called him the poets' poet. We may fairly leave the allegory on one side, for perhaps, after all, he adopted it only for the reason that it was in fashion, and put it on as he did his ruff, not because it was becoming, but because it was the only wear. The true use of him is as a gallery of pictures which we visit as the mood takes us, and where we spend an hour or two at a time, long enough to sweeten our perceptions, not so long as to cloy them. He makes one think always of Venice; for not only is his style Venetian,* but as the gallery there is housed in the shell of an abandoned convent, so his in that of a deserted allegory. And again, as at Venice you swim in a gondola from Gian Bellini to Titian, and from Titian to Tintoret, so in him, where other cheer is wanting, the gentle sway of his measure, like the rhythmical impulse of the oar, floats you lulling along from picture to picture.

"If all the pens that ever poet held
Had fed the feeling of their master's thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspired their hearts
And minds and muséd on admiréd themes,
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combined in beauty's worthiness;
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder at the best,
Which into words no virtue can digest." †

* Was not this picture painted by Paul Veronese, for example?

"Arachne figured how Jove did abuse
Europa like a bull, and on his back
Her through the sea did bear:
She seemed still back unto the land to look,
And her playfellows' aid to call, and fear
The dashing of the waves, that up she took
Her dainty feet, and garments gathered near.
Before the bull she pictured wingéd Love,
With his young brother Sport,
And many nymphs about them flocking round,
And many Tritons which their horns did sound."

Muioptomos, 281 - 296.

† Marlowe's "Tamburlaine," Part I. Act V. 2.

Spenser, at his best, has come as near to expressing this unattainable something as any other poet. He is so purely poet that with him the meaning does not so often modulate the music of the verse as the music makes great part of the meaning and leads the thought along its pleasant paths. No poet is so splendidly superfluous as he ; none knows so well that in poetry enough is not only not so good as a feast, but is a beggarly parsimony. He spends himself in a careless abundance only to be justified by incomes of immortal youth.

“ Pensier canuto nè molto nè poco
 Si può quivi albergare in alcun cuore ;
 Non entra quivi disagio nè inopia,
 Ma vi sta ogn’or col corno pien la Copia.” *

This delicious abundance and overrunning luxury of Spenser appear in the very structure of his verse. He found the *ottava rima* too monotonously iterative ; so, by changing the order of his rhymes, he shifted the couplet from the end of the stave, where it always seems to put on the brakes with a jar, to the middle, where it may serve at will as a brace or a bridge ; he found it not roomy enough, so first ran it over into another line, and then ran that added line over into an alexandrine, in which the melody of one stanza seems forever longing and feeling forward after that which is to follow. There is no ebb and flow in his metre more than on the shores of the Adriatic, but wave follows wave with equable gainings and recessions, the one sliding back in fluent music to be mingled with and carried forward by the next. In all this there is soothingness indeed, but no slumberous monotony ; for Spenser was no mere metrist, but a great composer. By the variety of his pauses — now at the close of the first or second foot, now of the third, and again of the fourth — he gives spirit and energy to a measure whose tendency it certainly is to become languorous. He knew how to make it rapid and passionate at need, as in such verses as,

“ But he, my lion, and my noble lord,
 How does he find in cruel heart to hate

* Grayheaded Thought, nor much nor little, may
 Take up its lodging here in any heart ;
 Unease nor Lack can enter at this door ;
 But here dwells full-horned Plenty evermore.

Orl. Fur., c. vi. 73.

Her that him loved and ever most adored
 As the God of my life? Why hath he me abhorred?" *
 or this,

"Come hither, come hither, O, come hastily!" †

Joseph Warton objects to Spenser's stanza, that its "constraint led him into many absurdities." Of these he instances three, of which I shall notice only one, since the two others (which suppose him at a loss for words and rhymes) will hardly seem valid to any one who knows the poet. It is that it "obliged him to dilate the thing to be expressed, however unimportant, with trifling and tedious circumlocutions, namely, *Faery Queen*, II. ii. 44:—

'Now hath fair Phœbe with her silver face
 Thrice seen the shadows of this nether world,
 Sith last I left that honorable place,
 In which her royal presence is enrolled.'

That is, It is three months since I left her palace." ‡ But Dr. Warton should have remembered (what he too often forgets in his own verses) that, in spite of Dr. Johnson's dictum, poetry is not prose, and that verse only loses its advantage over the latter by invading its province.§ Verse itself is an absurdity except as an expression of some higher movement of the mind, or as an expedient to lift other minds to the same ideal level. It is the cothurnus which gives language an heroic stature. I have said that one leading characteristic of Spen-

* B. I. c. iii. 7. Leigh Hunt, one of the most sympathetic of critics, has remarked the passionate change from the third to the first person in the last two verses.

† B. II. c. viii. 3.

‡ Observations on *Faery Queen*, Vol. I. pp. 158, 159. Mr. Hughes also objects to Spenser's measure, that it is "closed always by a full-stop, in the same place, by which every stanza is made as it were a distinct paragraph." (Todd's *Spenser*, II. xli.) But he could hardly have read the poem attentively, for there are numerous instances to the contrary. Spenser was a consummate master of versification, and not only did Marlowe and Shakespeare learn of him, but I have little doubt that, but for the "*Faery Queen*," we should never have had the varied majesty of Milton's blank verse.

§ As where Dr. Warton himself says:—

"How nearly had my spirit past,
 Till stopt by Metcalf's skilful hand,
 To death's dark regions wide and waste
 And the black river's mournful strand,
 Or to," etc.,

to the end of the next stanza. That is, I had died but for Dr. Metcalf's boluses.

ser's style was its spaciousness, that he habitually dilates rather than compresses. But his way of measuring time was perfectly natural at a time when everybody did not carry a dial in his poke as now. He is the last of the poets who went (without affectation) by the great clock of the firmament. Dante, the miser of words, who goes by the same timepiece, is full of these roundabout ways of telling us the hour. It had nothing to do with Spenser's stanza, and I for one should be sorry to lose these stately revolutions of the *superne ruote*. Time itself becomes more noble when so measured; we never knew before of how precious a commodity we had the wasting. Who would prefer the plain time of day to this?

“ Now when Aldebaran was mounted high
Above the starry Cassiopeia's chair ”;

or this ?

“ By this the northern wagoner had set
His seven-fold team behind the steadfast star
That was in ocean's waves yet never wet,
But firm is fixt and sendeth light from far
To all that in the wide deep wandering are ”;

or this ?

“ At last the golden oriental gate
Of greatest heaven gan to open fair,
And Phœbus, fresh as bridegroom to his mate,
Came dancing forth, shaking his dewy hair
And hurls his glistening beams through dewy air.”

The generous indefiniteness, which treats an hour more or less as of no account, is in keeping with that sense of endless leisures which it is one chief merit of the poem to suggest. But Spenser's dilatation extends to thoughts as well as to phrases and images. He does not love the concise. Yet his dilatation is not mere distension, but the expansion of natural growth in the rich soil of his own mind, wherein the merest stick of a verse puts forth leaves and blossoms. Here is one of his, suggested by Homer* : —

* Iliad, XVII. 55 *seqq.* Referred to in Upton's note on Faery Queen, B. I. c. vii. 32. Into what a breezy couplet trailing off with an alexandrine has Homer's *παντοίων ανέμων* expanded! Chapman unfortunately has slurred this passage in his version, and Pope *tittivated* it more than usual in his. I have no other translation at hand. Marlowe was so taken by this passage in Spenser that he put it bodily into his *Tamburlaine*.

"Upon the top of all his lofty crest
 A bunch of hairs discolored diversly,
 With sprinkled pearl and gold full richly drest,
 Did shake, and seemed to dance for jollity;
 Like to an almond-tree ymounted high
 On top of green Selinus all alone
 With blossoms brave bedecked daintily,
 Whose tender locks do tremble every one
 At every little breath that under heaven is blown."

And this is the way he reproduces five pregnant verses of
 Dante : —

"Seggendo in piume
 In fama non si vien, ni sotto coltre,
 Senza la qual chi sua vita consuma,
 Cotal vestigio in terra di se lascia
 Qual fumo in aere ed in acqua la schiuma." *

"Whoso in pomp of proud estate, quoth she,
 Does swim, and bathes himself in courtly bliss,
 Does waste his days in dark obscurity
 And in oblivion ever buried is ;
 Where ease abounds it's eath to do amiss :
 But who his limbs with labors and his mind
 Behaves with cares, cannot so easy miss.
 Abroad in arms, at home in studious kind,
 Who seeks with painful toil shall Honor soonest find.

"In woods, in waves, in wars, she wents to dwell,
 And will be found with peril and with pain,
 Ne can the man that moulds in idle cell
 Unto her happy mansion attain ;
 Before her gate high God did Sweat ordain,
 And wakeful watches ever to abide ;
 But easy is the way and passage plain
 To Pleasure's palace ; it may soon be spied,
 And day and night her doors to all stand open wide." †

* *Inferno*, XXIV. 46 – 52.

"For sitting upon down,
 Or under quilt, one cometh not to fame,
 Withouten which whoso his life consumeth
 Such vestige leaveth of himself on earth
 As smoke in air or in the water foam."

LONGFELLOW.

It shows how little Dante was read during the last century that none of the
 commentators on Spenser notice his most important obligations to the great Tuscan.

† *Faery Queen*, B. II. c. iii. 40, 41.

Spenser's mind always demands this large elbow-room. His thoughts are never pithily expressed, but with a stately and sonorous proclamation, as if under the open sky, that seems to me very noble. For example, —

“ The noble heart that harbors virtuous thought
And is with child of glorious-great intent
Can never rest until it forth have brought
The eternal brood of glory excellent.” *

One's very soul seems to dilate with that last verse. And here is a passage which Milton had read and remembered : —

“ And is there care in Heaven ? and is there love
In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,
That may compassion of their evils move ?
There is : else much more wretched were the case
Of men than beasts : but O, the exceeding grace
Of highest God that loves his creatures so,
And all his works with mercy doth embrace,
That blessed angels he sends to and fro,
To serve to wicked man, to serve his wicked foe !

“ How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succor us that succor want,
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The fleeting skies like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant !
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant ;
And all for love and nothing for reward ;
O, why should heavenly God to men have such regard.” †

His natural tendency is to shun whatever is sharp and abrupt. He loves to prolong emotion, and lingers in his honeyed sensations like a bee in the translucent cup of a lily. So entirely are beauty and delight in it the native element of Spenser, that, whenever in the “*Faery Queen*” you come suddenly on the moral, it gives you a shock of unpleasant surprise, a kind of grit, as when one's teeth close on a bit of gravel in a dish of strawberries and cream. He is the most fluent of our poets. Sensation passing through emotion into revery is a prime quality of his manner. And to read him puts one in the

* *Faery Queen*, B. I. c. v. 1.

† *Ibid.*, B. II. c. viii. 1, 2.

condition of reverie, a state of mind in which our thoughts and feelings float motionless, as one sees fish do in a gentle stream, with just enough vibration of their fins to keep themselves from going down with the current, while their bodies yield indolently to all its soothing curves. He chooses his language for its rich canorousness rather than for intensity of meaning. To characterize his style in a single word, I should call it *costly*. None but the daintiest and nicest phrases will serve him, and he allures us from one to the other with such cunning baits of alliteration, and such sweet lapses of verse, that never any word seems more eminent than the rest, nor detains the feeling to eddy around it, but you must go on to the end before you have time to stop and muse over the wealth that has been lavished on you. But he has characterized and exemplified his own style better than any description could do:—

“For round about the walls yclothed were
 With goodly arras of great majesty,
 Woven with gold and silk so close and near
 That the rich metal lurked privily
 As faining to be hid from envious eye;
 Yet here and there and everywhere, unwares
 It showed itself and shone unwillingly
 Like to a discolored snake whose hidden snares
 Through the green grass his long bright-burnished back declares.”*

And of the lulling quality of his verse take this as a sample:—

“And, more to lull him in his slumber soft,
 A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down
 And ever drizzling rain upon the loft,
 Mixt with the murmuring wind much like the soun
 Of swarming bees did cast him in a swoon.
 No other noise, nor peoples’ troublous cries,
 As still are wont to annoy the walled town,
 Might there be heard: but careless quiet lies
 Wrapt in eternal silence far from enemies.”†

In the world into which Spenser carries us there is neither time nor space, or rather it is outside of and independent of them both, and so is purely ideal, or, more truly, imaginary; yet it is full of form, color, and all earthly luxury, and so far,

* B. III. c. xi. 28.

† B. I. c. i. 41.

if not real, yet apprehensible by the senses. There are no men and women in it, yet it throngs with airy and immortal shapes that have the likeness of men and women, and hint at some kind of foregone reality. Now this place, somewhere between mind and matter, between soul and sense, between the actual and the possible, is precisely the region which Spenser assigns (if I have rightly divined him) to the poetic susceptibility of impression, —

“ To reign in the air from the earth to highest sky.”

Underneath every one of the senses lies the soul and spirit of it, dormant till they are magnetized by some powerful emotion. Then whatever is imperishable in us recognizes for an instant and claims kindred with something outside and distinct from it, yet in some inconceivable way a part of it, that flashes back on it an ideal beauty which impoverishes all other companionship. This exaltation with which love sometimes subtilizes the nerves of coarsest men so that they feel and see, not the thing as it seems to others, but the beauty of it, the joy of it, the soul of eternal youth that is in it, would appear to have been the normal condition of Spenser. While the senses of most men live in the cellar, his “were laid in a large upper chamber which opened toward the sunrising.”

“ His birth was of the womb of morning dew,
And his conception of the joyous prime.”

The very greatest poets (and is there, after all, more than one of them?) have a way, I admit, of getting within our inmost consciousness and in a manner betraying us to ourselves. There is in Spenser a remoteness very different from this, but it is also a seclusion, and quite as agreeable, perhaps quite as wholesome in certain moods when we are glad to get away from ourselves and those importunate trifles which we gravely call the realities of life. In the warm Mediterranean of his mind everything

“ Suffers a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.”

He lifts everything, not beyond recognition, but to an ideal distance where no mortal, I had almost said human, fleck is visible. Instead of the ordinary bridal gifts, he hallows his

wife with an Epithalamion fit for a conscious goddess, and the "savage soil" * of Ireland becomes a turf of Arcady under her feet, where the merchants' daughters of the town are no more at home than the angels and the fair shapes of pagan mythology whom they meet there. He seems to have had a common-sense side to him, and could look at things (if we may judge by his tract on Irish affairs) in a practical and even hard way; but the moment he turned toward poetry he fulfilled the condition which his teacher Plato imposes on poets, and had not a particle of prosaic understanding left. His fancy, habitually moving about in worlds not realized, unrealizes everything at a touch. The critics blame him because in his Prothalamion the subjects of it enter on the Thames as swans and leave it at Temple Gardens as noble damsels; but to those who are grown familiar with his imaginary world such a transformation seems as natural as in the old legend of the Knight of the Swan.

"Come now ye damsels, daughters of Delight,

Help quickly her to dight:

But first come ye, fair Hours, which were begot

In Jove's sweet paradise of Day and Night, . . .

And ye three handmaids of the Cyprian Queen,

The which do still adorn her beauty's pride,

Help to adorn my beautiful bride.

Crown ye god Bacchus with a coronal,

And Hymen also crown with wreaths of vine,

And let the Graces dance unto the rest, —

For they can do it best.

The whiles the maidens do their carols sing,

To which the woods shall answer and their echo ring."

The whole Epithalamion is very noble, with an organ-like roll and majesty of numbers, while it is instinct with the same joyousness which must have been the familiar mood of Spenser. It is no superficial and tiresome merriment, but a profound delight in the beauty of the universe and in that delicately sur-

* This phrase occurs in the sonnet addressed to the Earl of Ormond and in that to Lord Grey de Wilton in the series prefixed to the "Faery Queen." These sonnets are of a much stronger build than the "Amoretti," and some of them (especially that to Sir John Norris) recall the firm tread of Milton's, though differing in structure.

faced nature of his which was its mirror and counterpart. Sadness was alien to him, and at funerals he was, to be sure, a decorous mourner, as could not fail with so sympathetic a temperament; but his condolences are graduated to the unimpassioned scale of social requirement. Even for Sir Philip Sidney his sighs are regulated by the official standard. It was in an unreal world that his affections found their true object and vent, and it is in an elegy of a lady whom he had never known that he puts into the mouth of a husband whom he has evaporated into a shepherd, the two most naturally pathetic verses he ever penned: —

“I hate the day because it lendeth light
To see all things, but not my love to see.” *

In the Epithalamion there is an epithet which has been much admired for its felicitous tenderness: —

“Behold, whiles she before the altar stands,
Hearing the holy priest that to her speakes
And blesseth her with his two *happy* hands.”

But the purely impersonal passion of the artist had already guided him to this lucky phrase. It is addressed by Holiness — a dame surely as far abstracted from the enthusiasms of love as we can readily conceive of — to Una, who, like the visionary Helen of Dr. Faustus, has every charm of womanhood, except that of being alive as Juliet and Beatrice are.

“O happy earth,
Whereon thy innocent feet do ever tread!” †

Can we conceive of Una, the fall of whose foot would be as soft as that of a rose-leaf upon its mates already fallen, — can we conceive of her treading anything so sordid? No; it is only on some unsubstantial floor of dream that she walks securely, herself a dream. And it is only when Spenser has escaped thither, only when this glamour of fancy has rarefied his wife till she is grown almost as purely a creature of the imagination as the other ideal images with which he converses, that his feeling becomes as nearly passionate — as nearly human, I was on the point of saying — as with him is possible. I am so far from

* Daphnaida, 407, 408.

† Faery Queen, B. I. c. x. 9.

blaming this idealizing property of his mind, that I find it admirable in him. It is his quality, not his defect. Without some touch of it life would be unendurable prose. If I have called the world to which he transports us a world of unreality, I have wronged him. It is only a world of unrealism. It is from pots and pans and stocks and futile gossip and inch-long politics that he emancipates us, and makes us free of that tomorrow, always coming and never come, where ideas shall reign supreme. But I am keeping my readers from the sweetest idealization that love ever wrought : —

“ Unto this place when as the elfin knight
Approached, him seemed that the merry sound
Of a shrill pipe, he playing heard on height,
And many feet fast thumping the hollow ground ;
That through the woods their echo did rebound,
He nigher drew to wit what it mote be.
There he a troop of ladies dancing found
Full merrily and making gladful glee ;
And in the midst a shepherd piping he did see.

“ He durst not enter into the open green
For dread of them unwares to be descried,
For breaking of their dance, if he were seen ;
But in the covert of the wood did bide
Beholding all, yet of them unespied ;
There he did see that pleased so much his sight
That even he himself his eyes envied,
A hundred naked maidens lily-white,
All rangèd in a ring and dancing in delight.

“ All they without were rangèd in a ring,
And dancèd round ; but in the midst of them
Three other ladies did both dance and sing,
The while the rest them round about did hem,
And like a garland did in compass stem.
And in the midst of these same three was placed
Another damsel, as a precious gem
Amidst a ring most richly well enchased,
That with her goodly presence all the rest much graced.

“ Look how the crown which Ariadne wove
Upon her ivory forehead that same day,
That Theseus her unto his bridal bore,
(When the bold Centaurs made that bloody fray,
With the fierce Lapithes, that did them dismay)

Being now placed in the firmament,
Through the bright heaven doth her beams display,
And is unto the stars an ornament,
Which round about her move in order excellent ;

“ Such was the beauty of this goodly band,
Whose sundry parts were here too long to tell,
But she that in the midst of them did stand,
Seemed all the rest in beauty to excel,
Crowned with a rosy garland that right well
Did her beseeem. And, ever as the crew
About her danced, sweet flowers that far did smell,
And fragrant odors they upon her threw ;
But most of all those three did her with gifts endue.

“ Those were the graces, Daughters of Delight,
Handmaids of Venus, which are wont to haunt
Upon this hill and dance there, day and night ;
Those three to men all gifts of grace do grant
And all that Venus in herself doth vaunt
Is borrowèd of them ; but that fair one
That in the midst was placed paravant,
Was she to whom that shepherd piped alone,
That made him pipe so merrily, as never none.

“ She was, to weet, that jolly shepherd’s lass
Which pipéd there unto that merry rout,
That jolly shepherd that there pipéd was
Poor Colin Clout ; (who knows not Colin Clout ?)
He piped apace while they him danced about ;
Pipe, jolly shepherd, pipe thou now apace,
Unto thy love that made thee low to lout ;
Thy love is present there with thee in place,
Thy love is there advanced to be another Grace.” *

Is there any passage in any poet that so ripples and sparkles with simple delight as this ? It is a sky of Italian April full of sunshine and the hidden ecstasy of larks. And we like it all the more that it reminds us of that passage in his friend Sidney’s *Arcadia*, where the shepherd-boy pipes “ as if he would never be old.” If we compare it with the mystical scene in Dante,† of which it is a reminiscence, it will seem almost like a bit of real life ; but taken by itself it floats as unconcerned

* Faery Queen, B. VI. c. x, 10 – 16.

† Purgatorio, XXIX, XXX.

in our cares and sorrows and vulgarities as a sunset cloud. The sound of that pastoral pipe seems to come from as far away as Thessaly when Apollo was keeping sheep there. Sor-row, the great idealizer, had had the portrait of Beatrice on her easel for years, and every touch of her pencil transfigured the woman more and more into the glorified saint. But Elizabeth Nagle was a solid thing of flesh and blood, who would sit down at meat with the poet on the very day when he had thus beati-fied her. As Dante was drawn upward from heaven to heaven by the eyes of Beatrice, so was Spenser lifted away from the actual by those of that ideal Beauty whereof his mind had conceived the lineaments in its solitary musings over Plato, but of whose haunting presence the delicacy of his senses had already premonished him. The intrusion of the real world upon this supersensual mood of his wrought an instant disenchantment : —

“ Much wondered Calidore at this strange sight
Whose like before his eye had never seen,
And, standing long astonished in sprite
And rapt with pleasance, wist not what to ween,
Whether it were the train of Beauty’s Queen,
Or Nymphs, or Fairies, or enchanted show
With which his eyes might have deluded been,
Therefore resolving what it was to know,
Out of the woods he rose and toward them did go.

“ But soon as he appeared to their view
They vanished all away out of his sight
And clean were gone, which way he never knew,
All save the shepherd, who, for fell despite
Of that displeasure, broke his bagpipe quite.”

Ben Jonson said that “ he had consumed a whole night looking to his great toe, about which he had seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians, fight in his imagination ” ; and Coleridge has told us how his “ eyes made pictures when they were shut.” This is not uncommon, but I fancy that Spenser was more habitually possessed by his imagination than is usual even with poets. His visions must have accompanied him “ in glory and in joy ” along the common thoroughfares of life and seemed to him, it may be suspected, more real than

the men and women he met there. His "most fine spirit of sense" would have tended to keep him in this exalted mood. I must give an example of the sensuousness of which I have spoken:—

"And in the midst of all a fountain stood
Of richest substance that on earth might be,
So pure and shiny that the crystal flood
Through every channel running one might see;
Most goodly it with curious imagery
Was overwrought, and shapes of naked boys,
Of which some seemed with lively jollity
To fly about, playing their wanton toys,
Whilst others did themselves embay in liquid joys.

"And over all, of purest gold was spread
A trail of ivy in his native hue;
For the rich metal was so coloréd
That he who did not well advised it view
Would surely deem it to be ivy true;
Low his lascivious arms adown did creep
That themselves dipping in the silver dew
Their fleecy flowers they tenderly did steep,
Which drops of crystal seemed for wantonness to weep.

"Infinite streams continually did well
Out of this fountain, sweet and fair to see,
The which into an ample laver fell,
And shortly grew to so great quantity
That like a little lake it seemed to be
Whose depth exceeded not three cubits' height,
That through the waves one might the bottom see
All paved beneath with jasper shining bright,
That seemed the fountain in that sea did sail upright.

"And all the margent round about was set
With shady laurel-trees, thence to defend
The sunny beams which on the billows bet,
And those which therein bathed mote offend.
As Guyon happened by the same to wend,
Two naked Damsels he therein espied,
Which therein bathing seemèd to contend
And wrestle wantonly, ne cared to hide
Their dainty parts from view of any which them eyed.

"Sometimes the one would lift the other quite

Above the waters, and then down again
Her plunge, as overmastered by might,
Where both awhile would covered remain,
And each the other from to rise restrain ;
The whiles their snowy limbs, as through a veil,
So through the crystal waves appeared plain :
Then suddenly both would themselves unhele,
And the amorous sweet spoils to greedy eyes reveal.

“ As that fair star, the messenger of morn,
His dewy face out of the sea doth rear ;
Or as the Cyprian goddess, newly born
Of the ocean’s fruitful froth, did first appear ;
Such seemed they, and so their yellow hair
Crystalline humor dropped down apace.
Whom such when Guyon saw, he drew him near,
And somewhat gan relent his earnest pace ;
His stubborn breast gan secret pleasance to embrace.

“ The wanton Maidens him espying, stood
Gazing awhile at his unwonted guise ;
Then the one herself low ducked in the flood,
Abashed that her a stranger did advise ;
But the other rather higher did arise,
And her two lily paps aloft displayed,
And all that might his melting heart entice
To her delights, she unto him bewrayed ;
The rest, hid underneath, him more desirous made.

“ With that the other likewise up arose,
And her fair locks, which formerly were bound
Up in one knot, she low adown did loose,
Which flowing long and thick her clothed around,
And the ivory in golden mantle gowned :
So that fair spectacle from him was reft,
Yet that which reft it no less fair was found ;
So hid in locks and waves from lookers’ theft,
Naught but her lovely face she for his looking left.

“ Withal she laughèd, and she blushed withal,
That blushing to her laughter gave more grace,
And laughter to her blushing, as did fall.

“ Eftsoones they heard a most melodious sound,
Of all that mote delight a dainty ear,

Such as at once might not on living ground,
Save in this paradise, be heard elsewhere :
Right hard it was for wight which did it hear
To read what manner music that mote be ;
For all that pleading is to living ear
Was there consorted in one harmony ;
Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree.

“ The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempered sweet ;
The angelical soft trembling voices made
To the instruments divine response mete ;
The silver-sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the waters fall ;
The waters fall with difference discreet,
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call ;
The gentle warbling wind low answerd to all.”

Spenser, in one of his letters to Harvey, had said, “ Why, a God’s name, may not we, as else the Greeks, have the kingdom of our own language ? ” This is in the tone of Bellay, as is also a great deal of what is said in the epistle prefixed to the “ Shepherd’s Calendar.” He would have been wiser had he followed more closely Bellay’s advice about the introduction of novel words : “ Fear not, then, to innovate somewhat, particularly in a long poem, with modesty, however, with analogy, and judgment of ear ; and trouble not thyself as to who may think it good or bad, hoping that posterity will approve it,—she who gives faith to doubtful, light to obscure, novelty to antique, usage to unaccustomed, and sweetness to harsh and rude things.” Spenser’s innovations were by no means always happy, as not always according with the genius of the language, and they have therefore not prevailed. He forms English words out of French or Italian ones, sometimes, I think, on a misapprehension of their true meaning ; nay, he sometimes makes new ones by unlawfully grafting a scion of Romance on a Teutonic root. His theory, caught from Bellay, of rescuing good archaisms from unwarranted oblivion, was excellent ; not so his practice of being archaic for the mere sake of escaping from the common and familiar. A permissible archaism is a word or phrase that has been supplanted by something less apt, but has not become unintelligible ; and

Spenser's often needed a glossary, even in his own day. But he never endangers his finest passages by any experiments of this kind. There his language is living, if ever any, and of one substance with the splendor of his fancy. Like all masters of speech, he is fond of toying with and teasing it a little; and it may readily be granted that he sometimes "hunted the letter," as it was called, out of all cry. But even where his alliteration is tempted to an excess, its prolonged echoes caress the ear like the fading and gathering reverberations of an Alpine horn, and one can find in his heart to forgive even such a debauch of initial assonances as

"Eftsoones her shallow ship away did slide,
More swift than swallow shears the liquid sky."

Generally, he scatters them at adroit intervals, reminding us of the arrangement of voices in an ancient catch, where one voice takes up the phrase another has dropped, and thus seems to give the web of harmony a firmer and more continuous texture.

The land of Spenser is the land of Dream, but it is also the land of Rest. To read him is like dreaming awake, without even the trouble of doing it yourself, but letting it be done for you by the finest dreamer that ever lived, who knows how to color his dreams like life and make them move before you in music. They seem singing to you as the sirens to Guyon, and we linger like him:—

"O, thou fair son of gentle Faery
That art in mighty arms most magnified
Above all knights that ever battle tried,
O, turn thy rudder hitherward awhile,
Here may thy storm-beat vessel safely ride,
This is the port of rest from troublous toil,
The world's sweet inn from pain and wearisome turmoil.*

"With that the rolling sea, resounding swift
In his big bass them fitly answered,
And on the rock the waves, breaking aloft,
A solemn mean unto them measured,

* This song recalls that in Dante's *Purgatorio* (xix. 19-24), in which the Italian tongue puts forth all its siren allurements. Browne's beautiful verses ("Turn, hither turn your wingèd pines") were suggested by these of Spenser.

The whiles sweet Zephyrus loud whistled
 His treble, a strange kind of harmony
 Which Guyon's senses softly tickled
 That he the boatman bade row easily
 And let him hear some part of their rare melody.”

Three of Spenser's own verses best characterize the feeling his poetry gives us : —

“ Among wide waves set like a little nest,”

“ Wrapt in eternal silence far from enemies,”

“ The world's sweet inn from pain and wearisome turmoil.”

We are wont to apologize for the grossness of our favorite authors sometimes by saying that their age was to blame and not they. And the excuse is a good one, for often it is the frank word that shocks us while we tolerate the thing. Spenser needs no such extenuations. No man can read the “Faery Queen” and be anything but the better for it. Through that rude age, when Maids of Honor drank beer for breakfast and Hamlet could say a gross thing to Ophelia, he passes serenely abstracted and high, the Don Quixote of poets. Whoever can endure unmixed delight, whoever can tolerate music and painting and poetry all in one, whoever wishes to be rid of thought and to let the busy anvils of the brain be silent for a time, let him read in the “Faery Queen.” There is the land of pure heart's ease, where no ache or sorrow of spirit can enter.

J. R. LOWELL.

ART. V. — THE GRANGER MOVEMENT.

THE great Know-Nothing movement, so called, which swept over the United States about twenty years ago, apparently originated without cause, raged subject to no law, and finally subsided, having produced no permanent results. It was a species of popular squall preceding the long, violent tempest of the Rebellion. In this respect it furnished a striking exception to the general principles which mark the rise and development of widespread popular agitations. They seldom originate without cause ; and, in spite of blunders and mismanagement, rarely pass away without having contributed